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TODD SUCHERMAN, ANTONIO SANCHEZ, AND MATT JOHNSON ON THE PLAYERS WHO INFLUENCED THEM

FULL RESULTS–PAGE 24

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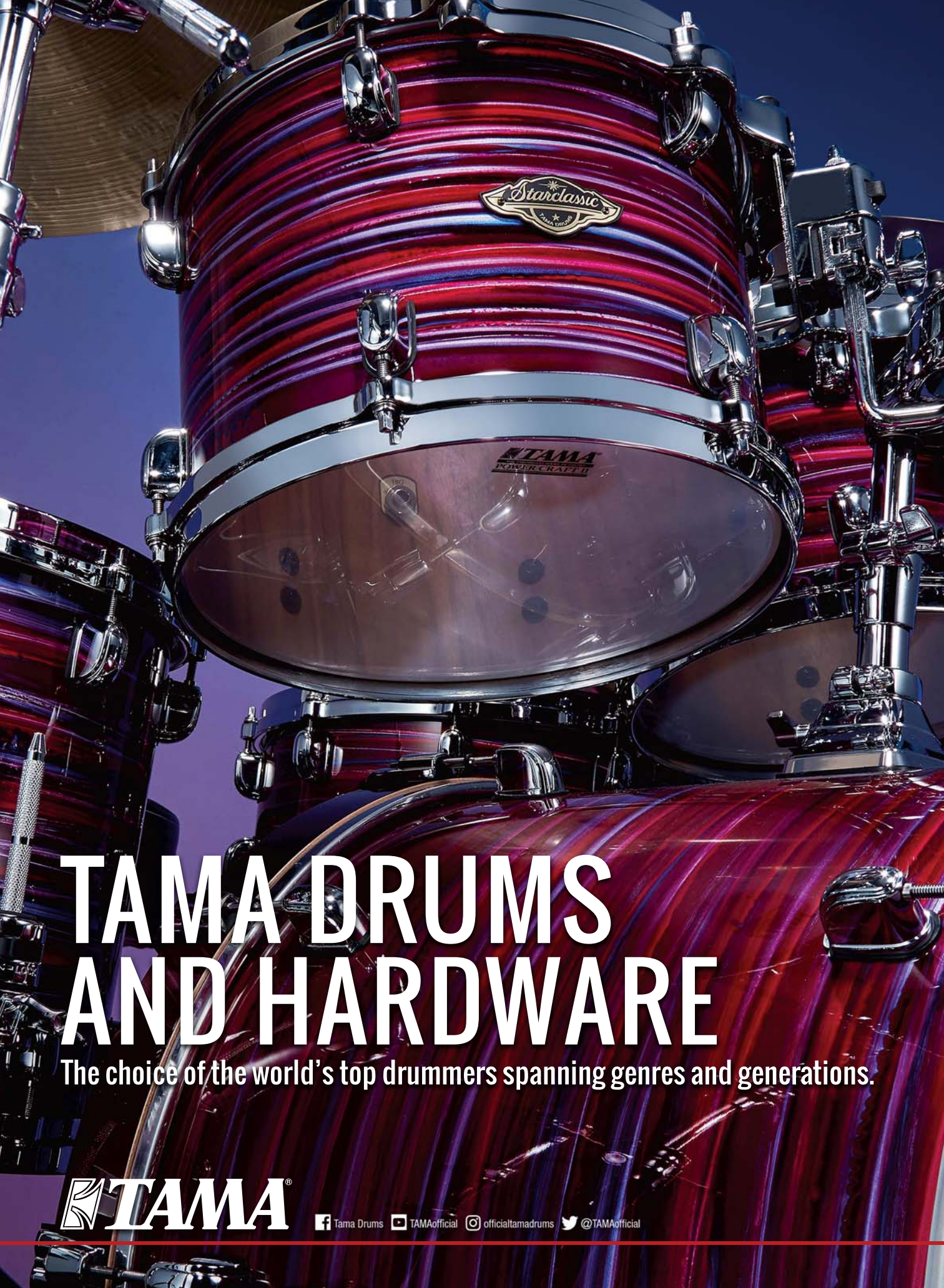

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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Long Live Rock!

Jim Esposito

For years, we rock 'n' roll fans have had to put up with endless proclamations that the music we love is on the outs. Sure, the charts make it clear that dance and pop music commands the masses' attention these days. But we can still take the title of the Who's classic track "Long Live Rock" to heart, even if the refrain "be it dead or alive" stings a bit more than it did back in the day.

Consider the fact that, as they close the first quarter-century of their existence, the Foo Fighters are as big and beloved as ever. Perhaps more than any other band on the planet, Dave Grohl's post-Nirvana vehicle represents the very heights of grandeur that rock can still attain. Perhaps it's no coincidence that it was DG's old bandmate Kurt Cobain who, thirty years ago, reaffirmed that smart, passionate, and heavy music could remain hugely successful despite the ascendance of hip-hop and other competing styles—as long as the right personality was steering the ship.

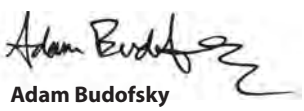
"Personality" might be a tough quality to define, but it's an easy one to recognize, and Grohl and his bandmate Taylor Hawkins, each of whom tops categories in this year's Readers Poll, have it in spades. Anyone who's been lucky enough to find themselves in close proximity to Dave or Taylor as they've brought their full technique, creativity, and emotion to bear on the instrument understands this.

My feeling is that the world's greatest rock 'n' roll drummers carry a level of intensity within them almost on a cellular level—like an actual super-power or something. Of course, it's all that other stuff—the years of dedicated solitary practice sessions, the weeks and weeks of focused band rehearsals, the lifetime of rock-history obsession—that usually determines success or failure on the world stage. A big personality will only get you so far, no matter what style of music you play. Though, it must be said that in all genres of music today it can be tough to separate the wheat from the chaff, what with all the stage and studio production tricks that can be used to mask mediocre skills.

Fortunately, those of you who vote in the *MD* Readers Poll aren't so easily fooled. This year, once again, you've put your knowledge, taste, and excitement to good use and given the ultimate props to the drummers who spark your imaginations, spike your emotions, and influence your drum workouts. And, as usual, you've not only acknowledged the rock players; you've chosen your favorite jazz and country drummers, supported pop and world players, selected the clinicians who've expanded your thinking, and more.

And I can assure you of this: each and every one of these individuals massively appreciates the gesture. It's the kind of thing that can keep musicians striving to be the best they can be, particularly in times when their projects, or even the very genres they play in, are struggling to capture ears in an almost impossibly crowded musical world. Invariably they'll tell you that their biggest hope is that you use their accomplishments to fuel your own dreams.

So long live rock, long live drumming—in *all* its guises—and long live your musical aspirations, whatever they may be.



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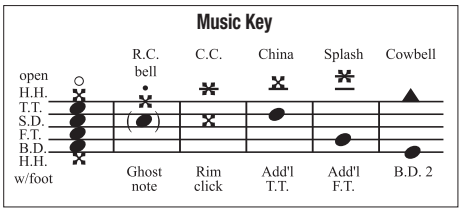

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What's Your Favorite Charlie Watts Performance?

When we first took to social media to ask which performances you'd recommend from the seminal Rolling Stones drummer, a bevy of diverse responses flooded in. It's easy to understand the range in choices; Charlie's signature drum sound, unique grooves, and loping feel have graced more than thirty studio albums and nearly as many live records in the fifty-plus years he's been in the Stones. Here are some of your responses.

Watts' performance on "Rock and a Hard Place" from *Steel Wheels* is an overlooked gem. It's about as close to a perfect, propulsive drum track as you'll find. The disco/funk breakdown Watts plays with bassist Bill Wyman near the end is the icing on the cake.
Jay Youngless

"Doo Doo Doo Doo Doo (Heartbreaker)" from *Goats Head Soup*. The groove is so funky, and I love the way he opens the hi-hat on the "&" of beat 3, followed by two snare notes on the "e" and "&" of beat 4 as a fill to bring the verse in. The dotted-16th tom fill between the chorus into the second verse is also a classic. It's a great song of social protest and is still relevant today. Another great one is the opening fat backbeat on "Slave" from *Tattoo You*. It's so greasy and funky, and it has one of the best snare drum sounds ever recorded!
Lynn Farmer

"Slave" is an *incredibly* funky track by Charlie and a bit more muscular playing than usual on his part. *Tattoo You* is one of my favorite Stones albums—it reeks of New York City all the way through.
Aaron Comess

I love the fill that he plays right at the beginning of the chorus of "Loving Cup" from *Exile on Main St*. It just has so much raw power.
Mike Benoit

There's a moment in "No Use in Crying" from *Tattoo You*, when Watts hits the snare on beat 3 in a 6/8 feel (instead of on beat 4), around the 1:13 mark. It just knocks me out every time. And "Start Me Up" from the same album has such a cool, interesting intro. Watts comes in with the hi-hat on beat 3, bass drum on 4, the snare on beat 1, and then holds out until the next backbeat on beat 4. It's classic Charlie!
A. Michael Collins

"Love Is Strong" off *Voodoo Lounge* has a great overall drum sound. Watts' restraint with his China cymbal gives it extra emphasis, and there's subtle, unpredictable playing and fills throughout, especially during the first chorus. He always finds unorthodox, "sloppy" ways to fill time, and it's just so cool.
Gentry Bellus

The first time I heard the fill leading into the chorus of "Loving Cup," I just kept repeating it over and over. It blew my mind. It's so punchy and funky, and still manages to stay straight and to the point. Back to the groove, back to the fill again, and then back into the verse. It's not re-inventing the wheel, but it's the best example of a great rock 'n' roll band exploring its roots and expanding on its bag of tricks.
Jason Winner

"Memory Motel" from *Black and Blue* has great fills that perfectly fit the song. And that's not to mention Watts' great snare, tom, and cymbal sounds.
Andrew Messineo

I'd say "Under My Thumb" from the fortieth-anniversary edition of *Get Yer Ya Ya's Out! The Rolling Stones in Concert*. That show was epic! Everyone was perfect. And during the beginning of "Honky Tonk Women," even Mick Jagger remarked, "Charlie's good tonight, isn't he?"
David Laskin

"Can't You Hear Me Knocking" because of the incredibly groovy middle Latin section, when the whole band suddenly adopts this great feel. The rock 'n' roll attitude takes a pause, and they just groove.
Måns Ekman

"Rocks Off" from *Exile on Main Street* has a great sound, and I love the way that he keeps changing the "lope" and feel of the song's fadeout.
Phil Dahlquist

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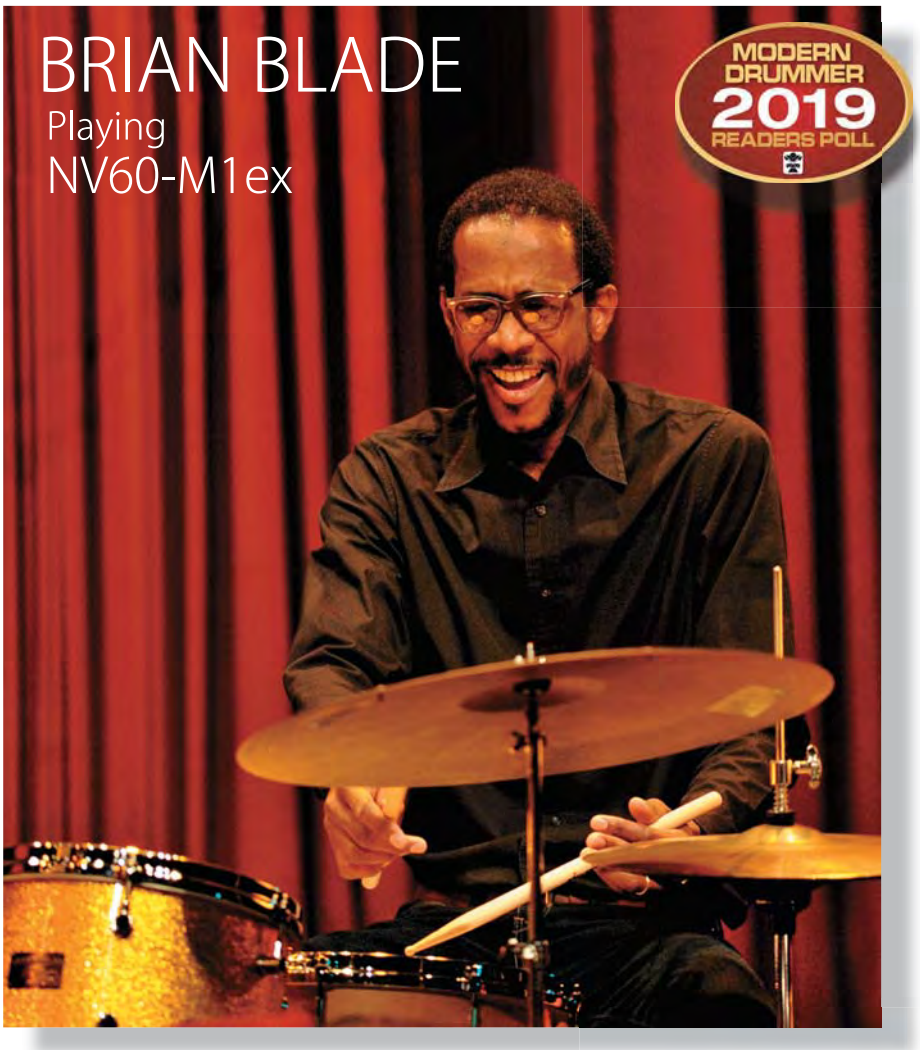

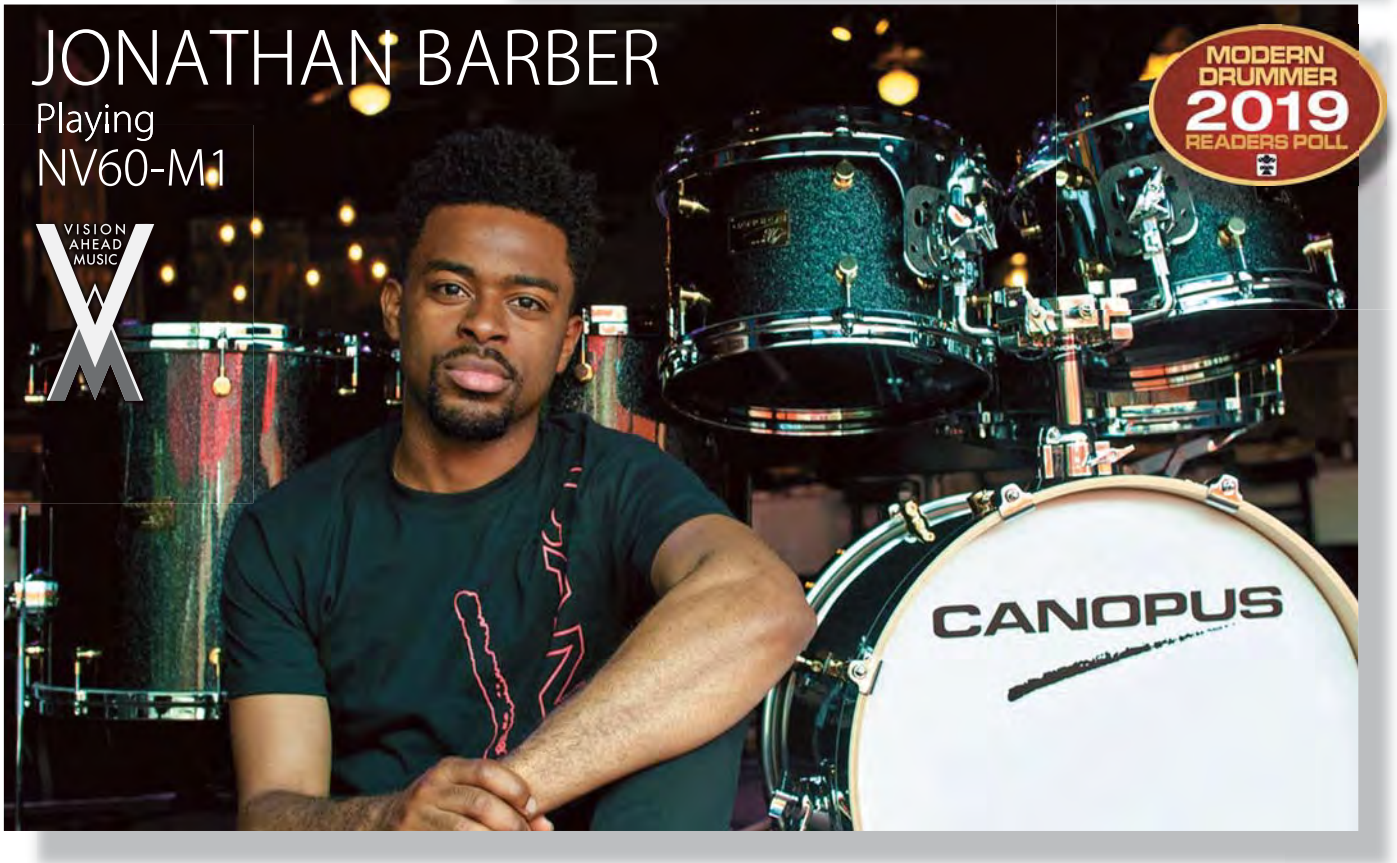

OUT NOW

Sean Lennon on the Claypool Lennon Delirium's *South of Reality*

Tal Wilkenfeld

The multitalent embraces oddness on the superduo's latest psychedelic trip, channeling his iconic father's unique approach to rhythm.

On February 22 the Claypool Lennon Delirium—an alternative psychedelic group that consists of Primus frontman Les Claypool and multi-instrumentalist/drummer Sean Ono Lennon—released their new album, *South of Reality*. The effort is the third release for the pair on ATO Records, including their 2016 full-length debut, *Monolith of Phobos*, and the 2017 covers EP *Lime and Limpid Green*.

Lennon, who's been playing drums since childhood—and has done so on all of his solo records—covers drum duties on all but three tracks on this latest project. "I play drums on the first single, 'Blood and Rockets,'" says Lennon. "But I never thought I was going to play drums on the recordings with this band. When Les and I got together to write our first album, the plan was that we'd write the songs with me on drums to get the structure, and then we'd bring in the 'real' drummer. Three songs into that project Les said, 'I like your loopy feel. You should do the drums on the record.'"

Lennon certainly proved quickly that he could handle the drumming behind the project. "When first going into it, I was so nervous to play with Les, even though we were already friends," Lennon says. "I'd never recorded with him. He's such an amazing bass player and multi-instrumentalist. He's a virtuoso, and his drummers are world class. Les was the one who encouraged me to play. But there are three songs [on *South of Reality*] that just seemed out of my range: 'Amethyst Realm,' 'Boriska,' and 'Ask Your Doctor/Cricket Chronicles.' I basically begged and pleaded to have Paulo Baldi, who was in Cake and is our touring drummer, to play those, and he's amazing."

South of Reality's first single, "Blood and Rockets," is an experimental psych-rock song about pioneering American rocket engineer and occultist Jack Parsons. Toward the end of the tune, Lennon launches into an interesting loping feel in five. "I thought it'd be funny," Lennon explains, "because of the pentagram and because Parsons' whole cosmology was based around that kind of sacred geometry. It represents his magic, and him taking off to the spirit realm."

"Toady Man's Hour" also features some tricky meters, with extra measures of 2/4 interspersed throughout the otherwise 4/4 verses. "I'm a huge fan of odd time signatures," Lennon says, "and that came mostly from listening to bands like Mahavishnu Orchestra and [its drummer] Billy Cobham. But the first exposure I got to odd times was listening to my dad's songs: 'All You Need Is Love' has a bar of two, and 'Good Morning' has a really weird time signature. 'Happiness Is a Warm Gun' also goes all over the place." Despite the odd rhythms, Lennon says that "Toady Man's Hour" was one of the easiest songs for him to play. "There's something about it that's in my zone. I like my groove enough when it's slow. That one feels really natural to me."

Listeners could easily make a stylistic comparison between Sean's playing on *South of Reality* and that of Beatles drummer Ringo Starr. Was Ringo's playing an influence on him growing up? "Oh my God, of course," Sean chuckles. "And so was his sense of humor."

South of Reality was written and recorded in two months, with Lennon and Claypool co-producing and the Primus frontman engineering and mixing at his studio in Sonoma County, California. "Les has this hybrid drumkit that sounds amazing," Lennon says. "He also has all these weird bells and woodblocks, a classic Ludwig Black Beauty snare, and a set of giant Rototoms."

The Lennon Claypool Delirium will be supporting *South of Reality* on a headlining U.S. tour this coming April. For more with Sean Lennon, head to moderndrummer.com.

Billy Amendola

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ON TOUR

The ever-busy sticksman backs the seasoned indie songwriter on her latest international tour.

The Los Angeles–based touring and session drummer Kyle Crane has steadily built a busy and successful career working with producer and songwriter Daniel Lanois, M. Ward (She & Him, Monsters of Folk), and Björn Yttling of the indie hitmakers Peter Bjorn and John, among others. Beyond balancing those gigs with his own solo project, Crane has joined the indie singer/songwriter Neko Case on an international tour in support of her 2018 effort, *Hell-On*. Crane first joined Case for an impromptu percussion performance on *Hell-On*, after the drummers Matt Chamberlain, Barbara Gruska, Dan Hunt, and Tobias Tagesson had already laid down the album's drumset parts. This month he's backing Case on her Australian dates before the group heads stateside for a North American leg that lasts until June.

To match the open, roomy textures that define *Hell-On*'s drum sounds, Crane made a few adjustments to his touring C&C setup. "Neko's drums are really blended in with the music," Crane says. "So I didn't want drums with a lot of tape on them, like super-focused thuds—I wanted it to be live. At the most, I have a Moongel on the rack and floor. The kick has a little padding, more just to hold a mic inside of it so it doesn't flop around. But it's a pretty open-sounding kit."

Before joining Case on the road, Crane did his homework, studying YouTube clips of her performances. But once in rehearsals with the group in Seattle, he discovered some substantial differences in the live approach to the songs. "The hardest thing about playing with Neko," Crane says, "is navigating the different tempo feels within a song. On 'This Tornado Loves You,' for example, the B section drops around fifteen bpm and just puts on the brakes. During a two-bar fill coming out of that section, I have to get it back to where it was. Neko will want things to push and pull depending on the section. And sometimes she'll want the first verse of a song to be slower than the last verse. So I had to adapt to certain requests like that."

Crane says that during rehearsals he homed in on tempos and focused on the way Case's tracks were supposed to feel. "On a song like 'Hold On, Hold On,' where the guitars start it," he says, "I'll put on a click and count it off, but I'm not playing for a while so I turn it off while the guitars are going. And I'm the only one who hears the click, so I'll turn it back on maybe midway through their intro to see if I need to push it a couple bpm. You have to find a way to get it back to Neko's favorite tempo without it being jarring.

"Every song is a little different," Crane says. "There's a song called 'Oracle of the Maritimes' that starts out slowly, and by the time I come in with the full beat—because I'm just playing tom mallet parts—it's been ramping up over the course of three minutes, and I'm just trying to get it to where the pianist wants it to be for him to play his part. You have to be really aware that things are going to get to where they have to be for everyone to be happy with how it should feel, and know whether to push it or hold it there." **Willie Rose**

Kyle Crane plays C&C drums and Istanbul Agop cymbals, and he uses Vic Firth, Remo, Tackle Instrument Supply, and KillSpencer products.

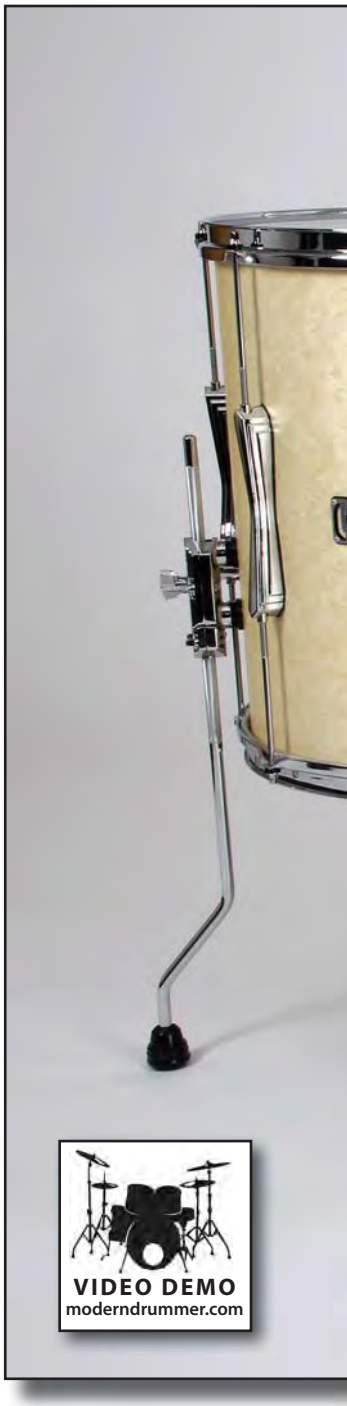
Also on the Road

Jean-Paul Gaster with Clutch /// **Adam Deitch** with Lettuce /// **Shannon Larkin** with Godsmack /// **Barry Kerch** with Shinedown /// **Scott Fuller** with Morbid Angel /// **Paul Mazurkiewicz** with Cannibal Corpse /// **Jon Syverson** with Daughters /// **Nico Rayman** with Dust Bolt /// **Ray Hearne** with Haken /// **Francis MacDonald** with Teenage Fanclub

British Drum Company

Lounge Series Drumset

The latest in a long line of English drum builders, offering distinctive drums since 2015.



Several personalities from the English drumming community came together to launch the British Drum Company. Head drum builder Keith Keough, who helmed KD Drums between 2004 to 2011 before joining Premier, cofounded the company with noted comedian Al Murray. Ian Matthews of the band Kasabian is creative director. Pete Salisbury of the Verve, Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, and the Charlatans is engineering design director. And Alan Kitching, who brings over twenty-five years of product design experience, including the Natal/Bullet and Kitch bass drum pedals, is product designer. We were sent a four-piece kit from BDC's Lounge series to check out.

Shipment Received

The set comprised a 5.5x14 snare, 8x12 and 16x16 toms, and a 14x22 kick. Its Wiltshire White finish was essentially an outer ply of figured Scandinavian birch. The bass drum featured oil-finished mahogany and birch hoops. The cross-laminated shells, made from nine thin plies of alternating mahogany and Scandinavian birch, were cold-pressed to a 5.5 mm thickness and finished with thirty-degree round-over bearing edges. By just tapping the shells right out of the box, it was obvious these drums possessed some serious tone. Light but sturdy, they looked great—from the mahogany ply and serial number decal on the inside to the distinctive badge and vent grommet dotting the outer veneer.

Cold-Pressed Shells and Appointments

Aside from the unique ply layup, the cold-pressed construction is what BDC believes is the secret to its unique sound and stable shell. The timber is allowed to acclimate to the surrounding environment naturally prior to molding, and the shell is built from the outer plies first. Neither heat nor moisture is used in the process, and the shell remains in the mold for at least four hours. This is a very different approach from standard steam-bent plywood shell construction.

The Lounge series features BDC's art deco–inspired Palladium hardware. The elegant lugs match the bass drum claws as well as the floor tom brackets, memory locks, and throw-off. Several musician friends commented how much they liked the logo and badges on this kit, as well as how the bass drum hoops had the same mahogany finish as the inside of the shell.

The small tom didn't include a mounting bracket, but it did come with BDC's Tomspring system, which comprises three plastic leaf springs that are held in place by tension rods on the bottom of the drum to allow it to resonate fully when mounted in a snare basket. A Palladium mounting bracket, which comes standard on BDC's Legend series, can be installed at the factory as a special order. My favorite design choices on this kit were the hexagonal floor tom brackets and interlocking arrowhead-shaped memory locks.

Tones

The Lounge series bass drum came with a Remo Powerstroke P3 batter head and a coated white front with no hole. There was a plastic hoop protector affixed to the hoop where the pedal attaches, to reduce pedal rash. The only dampening I bothered doing with this drum was wedging a rolled towel between the pedal and the head, but frankly it sounded great with no muffling at all. It was punchy and warm, and was praised by every sound engineer that I worked with during our review period. One engineer likened it to the processed kick drum sounds heard on OutKast's *Stankonia* album. I cranked it up quite high for a recording session so as not to clash with the range of an upright bass. While I wasn't looking for this 22" kick to sound like a bebop drum, it had a warm, round tone and didn't sound choked at that higher tuning.

The toms came with Remo Ambassador Coated heads on top and Ambassador Clear bottoms. This combination made for nice dry tones at higher tunings, but I found them to be a bit wispy unless I used some dampening. The Lounge series toms sounded fuller in middle or lower tunings with thicker heads. I ended up preferring a Vintage Ambassador Coated batter on the rack tom and an Emperor Coated on the floor tom. At times these drums reminded me of a late-'70s 9-ply luan/mahogany Pearl set that I love, because they both sound best when tuned low and fat. But the birch used in the Lounge series shells added a level of focus and clarity that no luan kit is going to have. While luan toms tend to disappear in a live mix, the Lounge series toms had great projection and presence in indoor and outdoor venues.

The eight-lug, 5.5x14 snare came with BDC-branded brass snare wires, a Remo Ambassador Coated batter, and an Ambassador Hazy bottom. As with most mahogany drums, it had a dry, papery character that sounded great when played with brushes or cranked up for Roy Haynes–style jazz comping. With the snares off, it had a great woody tom sound. And when muffled a bit, it produced a funky, fat backbeat. I liked the Palladium strainer; it reminded me of a Gladstone-style throw and was easy to use for fine adjustments on the gig.

Conclusion

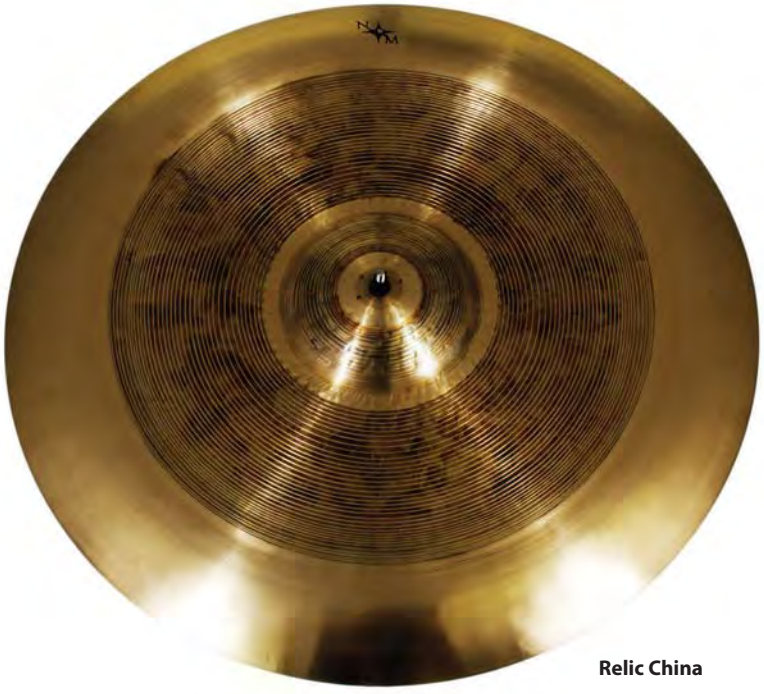
A four-piece Lounge series drumkit like the one we reviewed has a street price of $3,068 in the U.S. (The snare is $569, and the kick and toms are $2,499.) This might be lofty for a hobbyist, but it doesn't seem outlandish considering the build quality of these drums and their top-shelf tones. The kick drum is a dream, and the toms and snare have the warm, punchy qualities of classic mahogany shells but with more modern projection. British Drum Company currently offers several snares and a few other kits, so find a qualified drum shop that carries them, and check this stuff out.

Stephen Bidwell

NickyMoon

Custom Cymbals

One hundred percent handcrafted instruments for a truly one-of-a-kind experience.



Relic China

NickyMoon is a New Jersey-based one-man custom shop owned and operated by traditionally trained cymbalsmith Nicholas Margarite. In the "about" section at nickymoon.com, Margarite explains why he decided to take on the difficult task of hand hammering and lathing cymbals himself. "I started making cymbals because I could never find the sounds I heard in my head anywhere in the stores. Even with the vast amount of choices on the market, there's a particularly human element missing. I decided to change that and create my own unique instruments."

Nick learned the basics of cymbal hammering from California-based artist Heather Stine, then traveled to Brazil to study classic Turkish methods with master craftsman Francisco Domene. NickyMoon's catalog includes a range of uniquely designed b8, b20, and stainless-steel splashes, crashes, hi-hats, Chinas, and rides.

What He Does

Margarite imports raw bell bronze and phosphor-bronze cymbal blanks, with preshaped bells, from Turkish foundries. He then hammers them into shape, lathes them to the desired profile and thickness, and applies a finishing patina, polish, or protective coating. (Stainless-steel cymbals are hammered entirely from a flat sheet of metal.) Margarite also offers repairs and modifications to existing cymbals, whether that involves fixing cracks, additional hammering, lathing, custom patina finishing, or venting.

Our Sample Set

The sampling of cymbals we received for review provided an overview of the more traditional sounds NickyMoon currently offers. The set included 14" B20 Modern Angel hi-hats ($349), a 12" B20 Half Naked splash ($150), an 18" Half Naked crash ($315), a 20" B20 Relic China with an inverted bell ($339), a 20" B20 Limited Edition ride ($339), and a 20" B8 Immaculate crash-ride ($315). Because they're each handcrafted from start to finish, there's no way for Nick to duplicate these models exactly, but the basic design, weight, lathing, and finish can be closely matched to provide a similar look, sound, and feel.

The 14" Modern Angel hi-hats comprise a heavily hammered 963-gram top cymbal with wide lathing bands across the bow. The

Immaculate crash-ride

Half Naked crash

bottom cymbal weighs 1,095 grams and features more pinpoint hammering and tight lathing from the base of the bell to the outer 1" of the edge. Despite their boutique aesthetics, these hi-hats were envisioned to provide a great all-purpose sound, complete with a tight foot chick, a warm and articulate stick tone, and an open, rich wash. They had a bit of the breathiness you get from thin, vintage cymbals while retaining the power and crispness of modern models. Jazz, funk, rock, pop, electronica…they can do it all.

The 12" Half Naked splash and 18" Half Naked crash both feature a raw bell and inner bow and a tightly lathed outer section. The splash weighs 489 grams and produced a quick, bright, and flashy attack and a short, dark decay. It's not a glassy splash sound; it has a dark, complex tone designed to blend into a mix rather than sparkle atop it. The 18" crash has a raw bottom and weighs 1,438 grams. This is an explosive and dark-sounding crash that provides a lot of complexity on impact but gets out of the way quickly. There's a touch of trashiness in the tone, but not so much as to limit its versatility and musicality. You can also ride on this cymbal when playing in lighter situations. You know that super-comfortable sound and feel of a crash that's been broken in over years of use? Yeah, this one has that…right out of the box.

The 20" Relic China is a specialty of Margarite's and features an inverted bell that points in the same direction as the flanged edge. This allows for a more natural position on the cymbal stand, and it makes it easier to strike the bell for different tones. Jokingly referred to by Margarite as "the neighbor hater," this large China is actually surprisingly rich and musical. It has a dark, complex tone and clean articulation, which makes it a good choice as an alternative ride voice for lighter playing. But when you really smack it…look out! The decay is quick but not choked, and the attack is clean and powerful.

The 20" Limited Edition B20 ride weighs 2,313 grams, is hammered and widely lathed, and has a beautiful striped patina finish on the inner half of the bow. It has the dark, complex tone and woody attack of an old-school-style jazz ride but with more high-end shimmer and a tighter decay. The bell has a nicely integrated tone, and the crash sound is explosive yet controlled.

On the opposite side of the tonal spectrum, the 20" Immaculate crash-ride is handcrafted from B8 bronze and has a much brighter, glassier tone. It weighs 1,913 grams and has sparse pinpoint hammering and tight lathing. The center half of the bow features a copper-colored patina, while the outer edge is traditionally finished. This is a very smooth, crystalline ride with clean, clear attack and shimmery sustain. If you want a bright yet tonally rich ride that skates atop the mix with minimal murky overtones, like the sounds often used by jazz greats Al Foster and Paul Motian, this is it. It also doubles as a big, powerful crash.

If you're interested in learning more about these cymbals as well as some of the other creations NickyMoon has hammered out, visit nickymoon.com.

Michael Dawson

Limited Edition ride

Modern Angel hi-hats

Rogers USA

Dyna-Sonic Snares

A faithful reproduction of one of the most legendary drums of all time.

VIDEO DEMO
moderndrummer.com

Rogers Drums is an American manufacturer that was founded in the mid-nineteenth century. The company gained notoriety in the 1950s and '60s for its cutting-edge innovations, including the infinitely adjustable Swiv-o-Matic series hardware and ultra-sensitive Dyna-Sonic snare drums. After several decades of success under private ownership, Rogers was sold to CBS Musical Instruments in 1966 and eventually discontinued in 1983.

The Rogers brand was revived in 1998 by Brook Mays Music Company, mostly as a line of low-cost budget drums, and was then picked up by Yamaha Corporation of America in 2006. But it wasn't until 2013, when Taiwanese manufacturer Reliance International Corporation acquired the rights to the company, that a true Rogers revival was put into motion, beginning with a reissue of the coveted Dyna-Sonic wood snare.

Limited Releases

The new Dyna-Sonic snares are designed to be accurate replications of the original wood-shell models made during the company's heyday in the 1960s. The drums, which are only available in 5x14 and 6.5x14 sizes, feature ten lugs on shells constructed of five plies of maple and poplar with reinforcement rings. Original-era finishes include White Marine Pearl, Black Diamond Pearl, Silver Sparkle, Red Onyx, and Blue Onyx. We received a 5x14 in White Marine Pearl and a 6.5x14 in Red Onyx for review.

Classic Appointments

The initial run of Dyna-Sonic snares, which were released in 2017, featured classic-style "bread and butter" cast lugs. Last year the drums were adorned with Rogers' famed "beavertail" lugs, which were invented in 1963 to provide more durability and stability, as well as a slick art deco–inspired look. Unlike the original drums, new Dyna-Sonics feature plastic gaskets under the lug casings and between the tension rods and hoops to minimize metal-to-shell contact and to help promote smooth and secure tuning.

The triple-flange steel hoops are 1.6 mm thick, and the bottom hoop has a special

gate used to mount the patented Dyna-Sonic floating snare rail system. The strainer is an exact replica of "clock face" design used on the original drums, as are the script Rogers and oval Dyna-Sonic badges. The drums also include a thumbscrew-operated tone control system that comprises a 1.5" round-felt pad that lifts onto the underside of the batter head to dampen the sustain. The heads are a single-ply Remo Ambassador Coated batter and an Ambassador Hazy snare side.

Designed for Supreme Sensitivity

The defining feature of the Dyna-Sonic drums is Rogers' proprietary floating snare rail system, which is said to provide extra sensitivity and control. While all the extra components of this system may make it seem complicated and over designed, the concept is quite simple: the system allows you to tighten the wires for a crisp response without choking the bottom head. This is achieved by including independent control knobs for the height and horizontal tension of the wires. That way the throw-off height can be adjusted to raise the wires to make light and even contact with the bottom head while the rail screw is used to dial in the length of snare response.

It took a bit of experimenting to get a feel for how the two adjustments affect one another, but once I had it dialed in, these Dyna-Sonic snares proved to be exceptionally sensitive across the entire drumhead. And I could utilize tighter than typical snare tension for a super-short and crisp sound without the tone becoming choked.

Dry, Pre-Aged Tones

We tested these drums across the entire tuning range, and at each tuning we played them with and without the tone control muffler engaged. Both drums had an exceptionally dry, warm tone, even when played wide open. Without the tone control activated, the drums produced a balanced swathe of overtones that added a pleasing amount of ambience and brightness without obscuring the warmth and smack of the attack. With the muffler turned on, the drums sounded ultra dry, crisp, and punchy.

The 5x14 version favored higher tunings and performed exceptionally at lower dynamics, whether I was playing light, delicate jazz comping or quick, articulate ghost notes. It also produces a dry, popping backbeat that would give any James Brown–inspired groove an extra dose of authenticity. The 5x14 also does the ever-trendy deep thud sound very well. Just tune the batter head about as low as it can go, engage the tone control, and you're good to go.

The timbre and tone of the 6.5x14 Dyna-Sonic parallels that of the shallower version in terms of its dryness, musicality, and super-crisp sensitivity. While it sounded great at any tuning, it excelled in the coveted but often hard to control low-mid registers. Even without using the internal muffler, the overtones on the Dyna-Sonic were balanced and controlled, providing a supportive cushion of reverb-like sustain beneath heavy backbeats. If you're in need of a big, deep-sounding drum that can articulate the inner beats of the "Rosanna" shuffle like a shallow piccolo, this is the snare for you.

Visit moderndrummer.com to check out our demo videos that showcase the exceptional clarity and tuning versatility of these properly reproduced Rogers USA Dyna-Sonic snares.

Michael Dawson

Porter & Davies

BC-X Bass Drum Monitoring System

An ultra-compact yet powerful tactile throne kicker for everyday use in clubs, on tour, or in the studio.

Porter & Davies is a U.K.-based company that manufactures a range of high-quality tactile monitoring systems, including the flagship BC2, the rack-mountable BC2rm, and the portable BC Gigster. The company recently released its most affordable model yet, the BC-X, which touts 75–85 percent of the power of the larger systems but has a smaller (8x7.5x4) and lighter (6.61 lb.) engine and a 6x13 round throne top that has the transducer fully contained within the seat.

Plug and Go

The BC-X is super easy to set up. Simply plug in the engine, connect the included Speakon NL4 cable from the engine to the seat, and connect a drum mic or trigger module output to the input on the BC-X engine via an XLR or instrumental cable. After powering on the engine, turn up the input knob while playing the drum until the yellow LED indicator illuminates during your hardest notes. Then increase the master volume until you feel the desired amount of thump in the seat. If you're using the BC-X for personal monitoring only, you're all set. If you need to route the audio from the bass drum microphone or trigger module to a PA system, you can do so by connecting an XLR cable to the output jack on the engine.

How It Performed

The engine on all Porter & Davies systems are designed to replicate the attack, sustain, dynamics, and decay of the bass drum (or sample) being used as accurately as possible. So if you play with a wide-open bass drum sound, the seat will rumble for the entire length of the note the drum produces. If you bury the beater, or use a deader drum, the seat hits with a quicker, tighter punch.

Mic placement will also affect how the engine responds, in terms of overall level, attack, and decay. Even when the mic was placed all the way inside my kick drum, I had to crank the input of my Shure Beta 52A to the maximum in order to get a hot enough signal into the engine. I also ran into a level issue when running a Roland TM-2 trigger module directly to the BC-X, via an unbalanced instrument cable. In order to get enough juice into the engine, I had to run the TM-2 into a DI box first, so the signal could be converted into a balanced XLR output. Once I did that, there was plenty of power available to dial in a comfortable amount of thump.

I use a BC Gigster in my studio, and have found it to be an indispensable tool for adding some big low-end power to my in-ear and headphone mixes without actually producing any perceivable sound. Although smaller and slightly less powerful, the BC-X performed just as impressively as the Gigster. It was sensitive to changes in dynamics, touch, and tuning, and the seat top was firm but comfortable. The BC-X doesn't include the Low Contour knob, which is found on the higher-grade models and allows you to manipulate the length of sustain of the signal transmitted to the throne. Frankly, I didn't miss it. If your drum is tuned well, or the triggered sample you're using is appropriately matched to what and how you're playing, then the BC-X will give back exactly what you put into it. The BC-X engine, seat, and link cable sell for around $642. Bundles that include a throne base and/or hard case are also available as well. Check out porteranddavies.co.uk for more information.

Michael Dawson

Dios

NEW FOR 2019

IF YOU WERE EVER LOOKING FOR A KIT TO MAKE THE REST OF THE BAND JEALOUS, THIS IS IT. THE DDRUM DIOS MAPLE WITH EXOTIC ZEBRA WOOD VENEER KIT PACKS THE PERFECT AMOUNT OF STYLE AND FUNCTION THAT IS SURE TO BE THE ENVY OF EVERY STAGE IT GRACES. THIN NORTH AMERICAN MAPLE SHELLS DELIVER THE UNMISTAKABLE SOUND THAT THE DIOS LINE OF DRUMS HAS BECOME KNOWN FOR. *THE LIMITED EDITION KIT* FEATURES DDRUM PROPRIETARY HARDWARE WHICH INCLUDES OUR FIX PITCH MOUNT AND OUR PATENTED RESO LIFTS. PARTNERED WITH BLACK CHROME HARDWARE AND CLASSIC DDRUM BULLET TUBE LUGS, THIS IS ONE KIT THAT NEEDS TO BE FRONT AND CENTER.

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GEARING UP *ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE*

Protocol's Simon Phillips

While in Los Angeles, Simon Phillips uses this Tama Star kit, which is one of three setups he keeps in rotation. "I use whatever is available," he says. "It's all down to logistics. I'll ship them out to various places, so I get there, play, and then the kit comes back."

Discussing the evolution of his current setup, Phillips says, "The biggest change I made was back in 2012, and that was adding the little popcorn snare. That came about because of a recording session [for which] I decided to use my Ludwig Octaplus. I hadn't played it for a long time, and I thought that it might be cool on those sessions. That kit has concert toms from 6" to 16". The 15" and 16" are mounted toms, and the floor tom is an 18". I noticed there was a bit of a gap between the bass drum and the floor tom, so I thought it would be cool to slide in a little 10" drum.

"I enjoyed playing with that setup so much that I decided it was time for a big change," Phillips continues. "Instead of using three floor toms, I asked Tama to send two Star-Cast mounts, two hoops for the 15" and 16", and a double tom-tom holder. When they arrived, I ripped the heads off the toms, took the legs off, put the new hoops on top, and mounted them on the double-tom holder. Then I moved the 18" into the position that it was with the Octaplus. I've been using this setup ever since, and it's absolutely fantastic."

Drums: Tama Star Maple in Metallic Burgundy
A. 6.5x14 snare
B. 5.5x12 piccolo snare
C. 5.5x10 snare
D. Octobans (tuned to A, B, D, and E)
E. 7x10 tom
F. 9x12 tom
G. 10x13 tom
H. 11x14 tom
I. 12x15 tom
J. 13x16 tom
K. 14x18 floor tom
L. 14x20 gong drum
M. 15x24 bass drum

Sticks: Promark timpani mallets, wire brushes, and Simon Phillips signature model sticks

Cymbals: Zildjian A series
1. 14" Armand hi-hats
2. 24" Swish Knocker (from 1979)
3. 22" ride
4. 12" splash
5. 19" crash
6. 18" crash
7. 22" Oriental China Trash with 14" FX Trashformer nested inside
8. 17" crash

Drumheads: Remo Ambassador Coated snare batters, Ambassador Clear on tom and bass drum batters, and 2100 timpani head on gong drum

Hardware: Tama, including Iron Cobra bass drum pedals, an Iron Cobra Lever Glide hi-hat stand, Roadpro straight and boom cymbal stands, and an Ergo-Rider Trio throne

Electronics: Tama Rhythm Watch, Mackie 402VLZ3 mixer, and Roland TM-2 trigger module with BT-1 trigger pad

Microphones: Shure, including Beta 52s on bass drums and gong drum, SM57s on snares, a KSM137 on the hi-hats, Beta 181s on toms, SM27s as overheads, and KSM137s on the Octobans

Interview by John Martinez

Photos by Alex Solca

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MODERN DRUMMER 2019 READERS POLL RESULTS

The Foo Fighters' tandem drummers had another huge year in 2018, with Taylor Hawkins powering the band throughout its *Concrete and Gold* world tour and Dave Grohl reminding the world of his *own* remarkable kit skills on his twenty-three-minute instrumental "Play."

HALL OF FAME
Dave Grohl

"When I was really young and listening to Rush, I used to think how clever Neil Peart was at playing fusion-rock. He had fifteen toms and was all over them. I went from that to hearing the Bad Brains and all these obscure hardcore bands where the drummers were really outstanding, with each of them doing different things. Each of them had their own sound, which I thought was really cool. I think it's important for young drummers to find something that speaks to them." (March 1994)

Past Hall of Fame Winners

2018: Clyde Stubblefield
2017: Peter Erskine
2016: Vic Firth
2015: Ian Paice
2014: Carmine Appice
2013: Bernard Purdie
2012: Phil Collins
2011: Jim Chapin
2010: Hal Blaine
2009: Mitch Mitchell
2008: Ginger Baker
2007: Jack DeJohnette
2006: Charlie Watts
2005: Stewart Copeland
2004: Mike Portnoy
2003: Simon Phillips
2002: Steve Smith
2001: Dennis Chambers
2000: Dave Weckl
1999: Roy Haynes
1998: Ringo Starr
1997: Terry Bozzio
1996: Vinnie Colaiuta
1995: Elvin Jones
1994: Larrie Londin
1993: Jeff Porcaro
1992: Max Roach
1991: Art Blakey
1990: Bill Bruford
1989: Carl Palmer
1988: Joe Morello
1987: Billy Cobham
1986: Tony Williams
1985: Louie Bellson
1984: Steve Gadd
1983: Neil Peart
1982: Keith Moon
1981: John Bonham
1980: Buddy Rich
1979: Gene Krupa

FAVES' FAVES

"The first band that I fell in love with was Queen, so that led to **Roger Taylor** being my first major influence. I fell in love with the way he played songs, kind of like he was a whole orchestra pit. His drumset was kind of like that—his toms sounded almost like timpani, he'd always throw a bell or cowbell or Rototom in there, always using color to punctuate things in the songs. That led me, in the early '80s, to **Stewart Copland**. He changed the way you thought of drums in a rock 'n' roll setting. He was the most innovative drummer of the '80s. His technique and his spontaneity…if you watch live videos, he never played a song the same way twice—or the same tempo. [laughs]

"**Alex Van Halen**, I still marvel at his playing. He couldn't *not* swing if he tried. And the sound of his drums, the snare sound. At the same time I was also getting into **Neil Peart** heavily, and I was getting into **Larry Mullen Jr.**—those early U2 records were a big part of my listening at the time. He's never going to be doing drum clinics, but the way he played those songs was clever and unique.

"My later huge influences come down to two drummers. **Stephen Perkins** of Jane's Addiction completely turned hard rock drumming on its side and took it down avenues people weren't even considering. He took the goth thing and the metal thing and all these styles and turned them into something absolutely his own. The other drummer would be **Matt Cameron**. He's just so *gnarly*. First of all, his posture—he's sitting up perfectly straight. And if you look at his snare drum, there's like a 6" diameter where he's hitting the drum. He likes jazz, but he's just as heavy a rock drummer as anyone, and that's a rarity. And I love that he's such *not* a rock dude. He's unique."

For more with Taylor, go to moderndrummer.com.

FAVES' FAVES

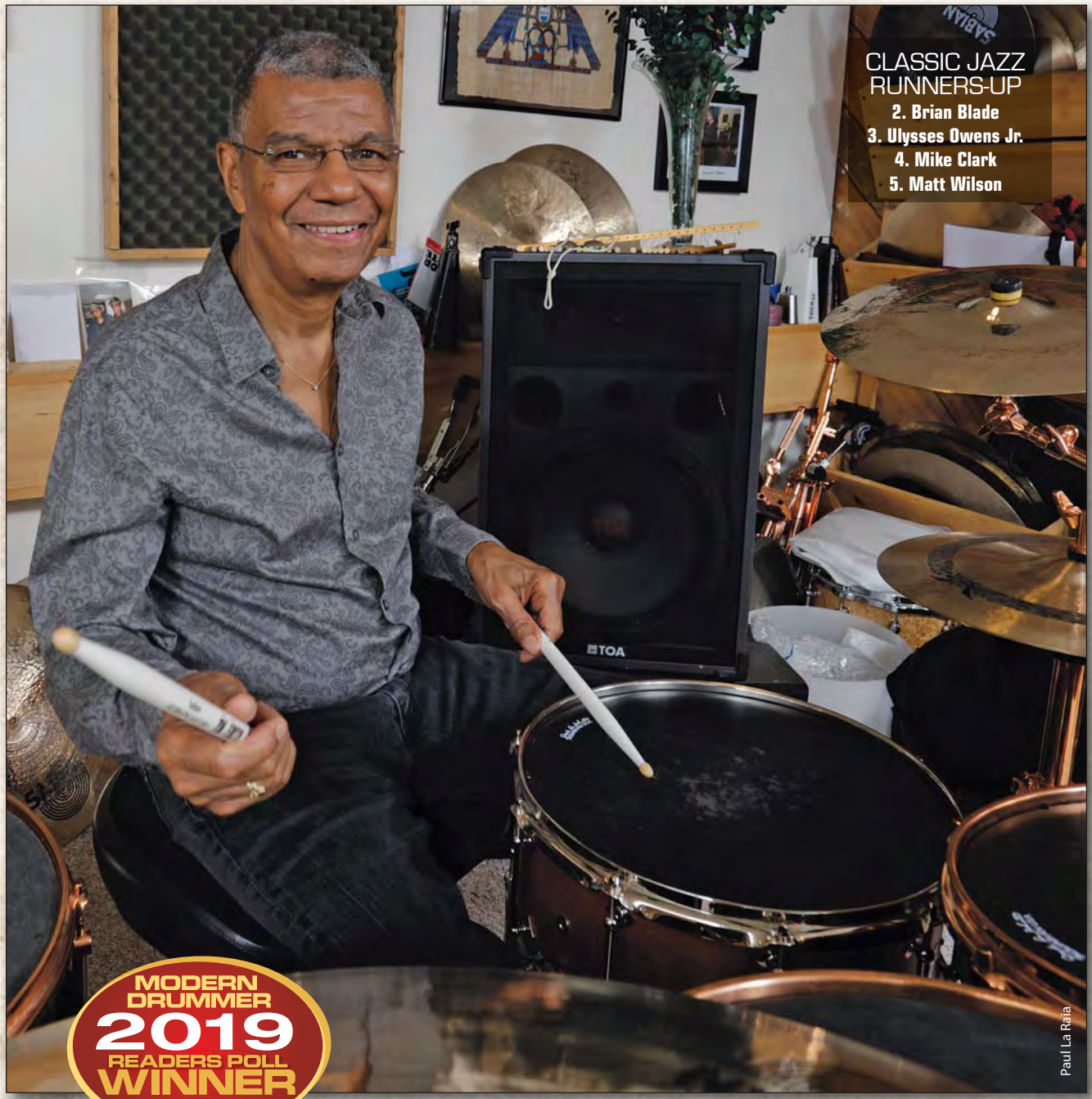
"I could talk about my favorite drummers until the sun goes down and comes up again. My first rock hero drummer was **Danny Seraphine**, since my mom brought *Chicago II* home. Fast-forward the clock a few years, and my holy trinity would be **Steve Smith**, **Tony Williams**, and **Vinnie Colaiuta**. But then where would I put **Ringo** or **Keith Moon** or **Elvin Jones** or **Dave Mattacks** or **Steve Gadd** or **Peter Erskine**? Or **Stewart Copeland** or **Mark Brzezicki** or **Manu Katché**. These were all drummers who had profound impact on me. **Simon Phillips**—my goodness, can't forget him. It's such a big, wonderful buffet out there—you get a little bit from this guy and a little from this guy—and hopefully you get your own unique plate and that comes out of you as a player. I could add a hundred more names. I love them all madly.

"The operative word in terms of what they all have in common is 'musician.' It's the way that they relate and react and become part of the music, and they actually morph into the storytelling process. That's something that I've always strived to do. The commonality is the fact that they're musicians first, and that's inherently important when you hear their recordings; it just always works. You could talk about **Steve Jordan** or **Jack DeJohnette**—very different players, but boy, they have your attention from the very first bar. These players loom large."

For more with Todd go to moderndrummer.com.

CLASSIC JAZZ
Jack DeJohnette

"Philly Joe Jones turned [the ride cymbal beat] around. Roy Haynes was doing that even before Philly Joe, though. They are around the same age, but a lot of what he played came from Roy. Elvin had a different kind of touch, a heavier touch. But listen to some of the licks that Roy played compared to Elvin; he took it totally in his direction and added valuable contributions that are still influential and resonate today. Then you had Tony Williams, and then, on the other end of the spectrum, great drummers like Andrew Cyrille, Paul Motian—Paul became a painter with the music, particularly in the quartet with Charlie Haden, Dewey Redman, and Keith Jarrett. In terms of freeing the drummer's role up, Rashied Ali is another one. Milford Graves, too. And all those guys could play time, but they were all into a multidirectional, more abstract approach to drumming; they put their own stamp on the music." (October 2017)



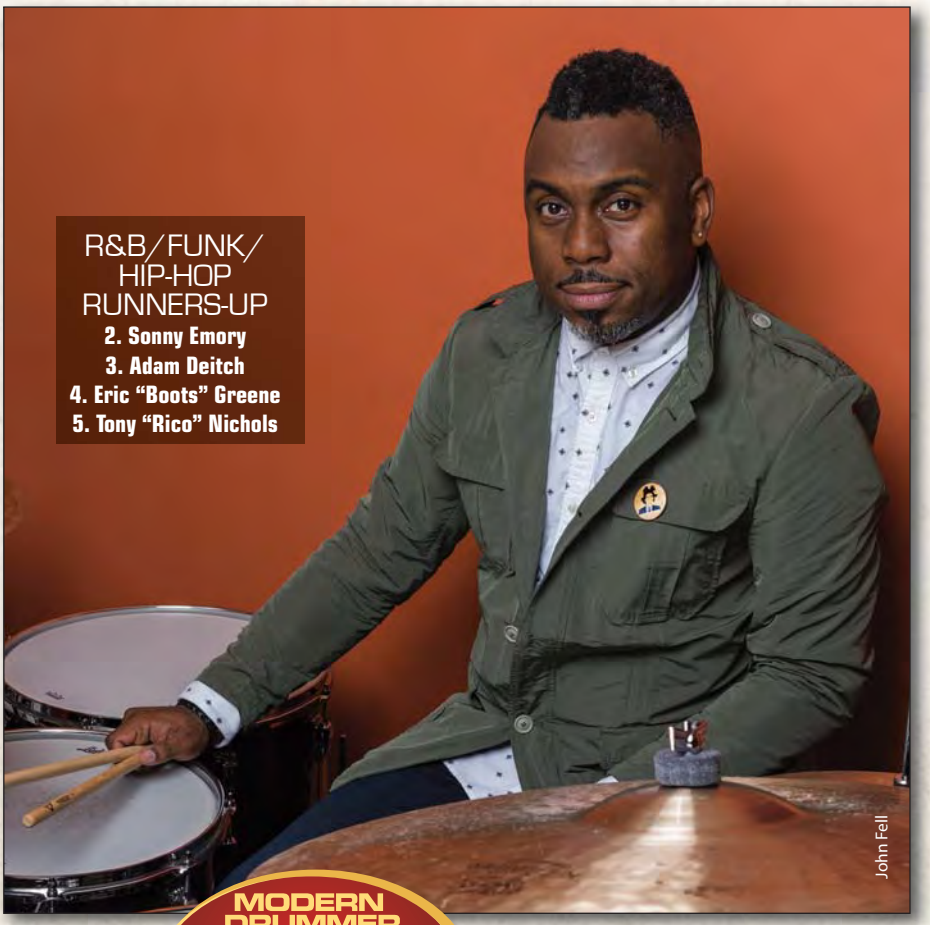
CLASSIC JAZZ
RUNNERS-UP
2. Brian Blade
3. Ulysses Owens Jr.
4. Mike Clark
5. Matt Wilson

MODERN DRUMMER 2019 READERS POLL WINNER

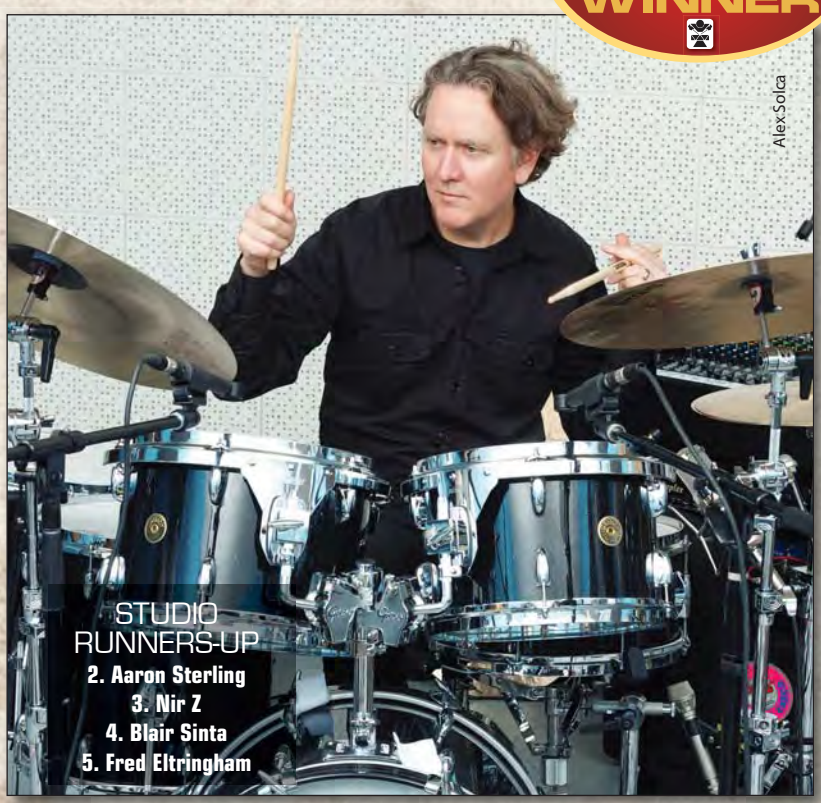
Paul La Raia

R&B/FUNK/ HIP-HOP
Nate Smith

"In some of the videos the unexpected happens. A stick will break, or I'll drop a stick or go for something that I don't quite pull off. People can see that it's improvised. And it's minimal; I'm just playing kick, snare, and hi-hat. I'm trying to find this language using the ghost notes and the hi-hat differently, with dynamics and touch. I used to set up a lot more drums, but I realized I wasn't playing them! I want to focus on what I'm actually playing and try to create a language. That might be part of why people are gravitating toward these videos." (September 2018)



MODERN DRUMMER 2019 READERS POLL WINNER



STUDIO
Matt Chamberlain

"For most singer-songwriter situations, I'm not going to be throwing down like I would in a jazz-improv situation. I'm looking for interesting sounds while interjecting some performance aspects and making the song feel good. Anybody can play this stuff technically, but it's about helping someone make the songs unique and different. There are only so many chord progressions and melodic ideas built into Western music, so what are *you* going to do?" (April 2017)

EXPERIMENTAL ROCK

Matt Johnson

(St. Vincent)

FAVES' FAVES

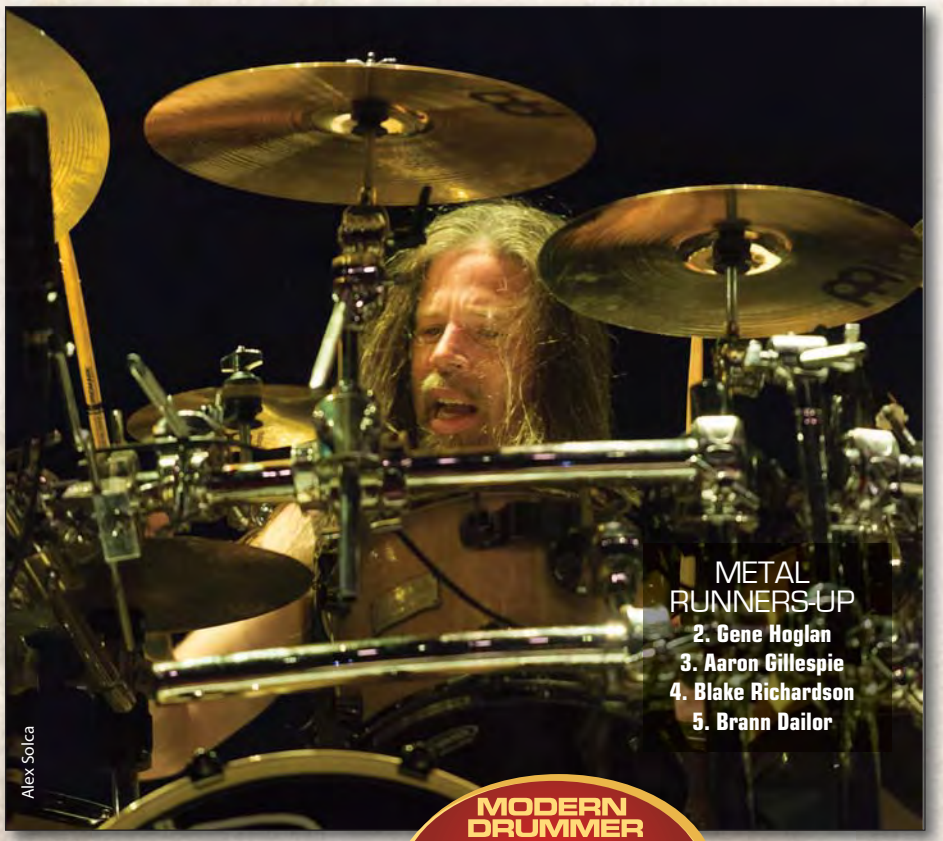
"I was like a lot of the kids in the '70s. I got super into Kiss, I was listening to the Cars, I really liked Rush. AC/DC, for heaven's sake, we were crazy about that. Of course Led Zeppelin. Van Halen, I was pretty obsessed with them between eight or nine and my teens. Maybe the first record that I was obsessed with was Supertramp's *Crime of the Century*. Brilliant, very sad record, with some really great drumming by **Bob C. Benberg**.

"In about 1980, when I was nine or ten, I started to figure out, Oh, that's **John Bonham**. I started playing in '80, so I started zeroing in on the drummers more then. Although I have to say, I didn't usually listen to music for the drumming. I'm still that way. I mean, drumming can interest me, but ultimately a lot of times it's about the total effect of a band or the music.

"But by high school and college I was trying to play along with Al Jarreau and Chick Corea records like *The Leprechaun* with **Steve Gadd** on them. I probably sounded like the worst drummer in the world [laughs], but I was giving it a go. Some of the stuff I liked was a little more abstract and I found it harder to play along to, but I was really into that Gary Peacock/Keith Jarrett stuff with **Jack DeJohnette**. There was a record called *Changes* that I pretty much wore out. Growing up in the suburbs of Texas in the '80s, you were steeped in Aerosmith and the Who and southern rock, but then you were aspirational and looking for something that was associated with New York or some other big city. I'd see that a lot of the records I liked were recorded in West Orange, New Jersey, like John Coltrane with **Elvin Jones**, or **Art Blakey** and the Jazz Messengers.

"One thing that hit us really hard was the movie *Apocalypse Now*, with the music that they used by the Doors [**John Densmore**]. That was so powerful, the way they used that music. Another core band was the Police [**Stewart Copeland**]. And I didn't really see it at the time the way I do now, but the incredible influence that some of those Nashville drummers were having on me. Those guys who were playing on the classic Willie Nelson records like *Stardust* [**Paul English**, **Rex Ludwick**] or *Red Headed Stranger* [Paul and **Billy English**]. Also Kris Kristofferson records. Those drummers…the economy! And we grew up on stuff like the Charlie Daniels Band, Ted Nugent, just absolute cock-rock. Ronnie James Dio's *Holy Diver* is almost like drum porn. **Vinny Appice** is so over the top on that. I'll tell ya, we had a hell of a lot of fun listening to that album. Just the *fearlessness* of it."

For more with Matt go to moderndrummer.com.



Alex Solca

MODERN DRUMMER 2019 READERS POLL WINNER

METAL
Chris Adler
(Lamb of God)

"When you love something, the strength builds within it. The frustration of not making any money for the first ten years we were a band, and all the dues we had to pay to get some success—that was easy to deal with, because I didn't care if there was light at the end of the tunnel or a bright side to the end of the band's story. I loved what I was doing, and I wasn't waiting to get paid back for it. If you put your heart into something, the success will come if you nurture that passion." (March 2013)

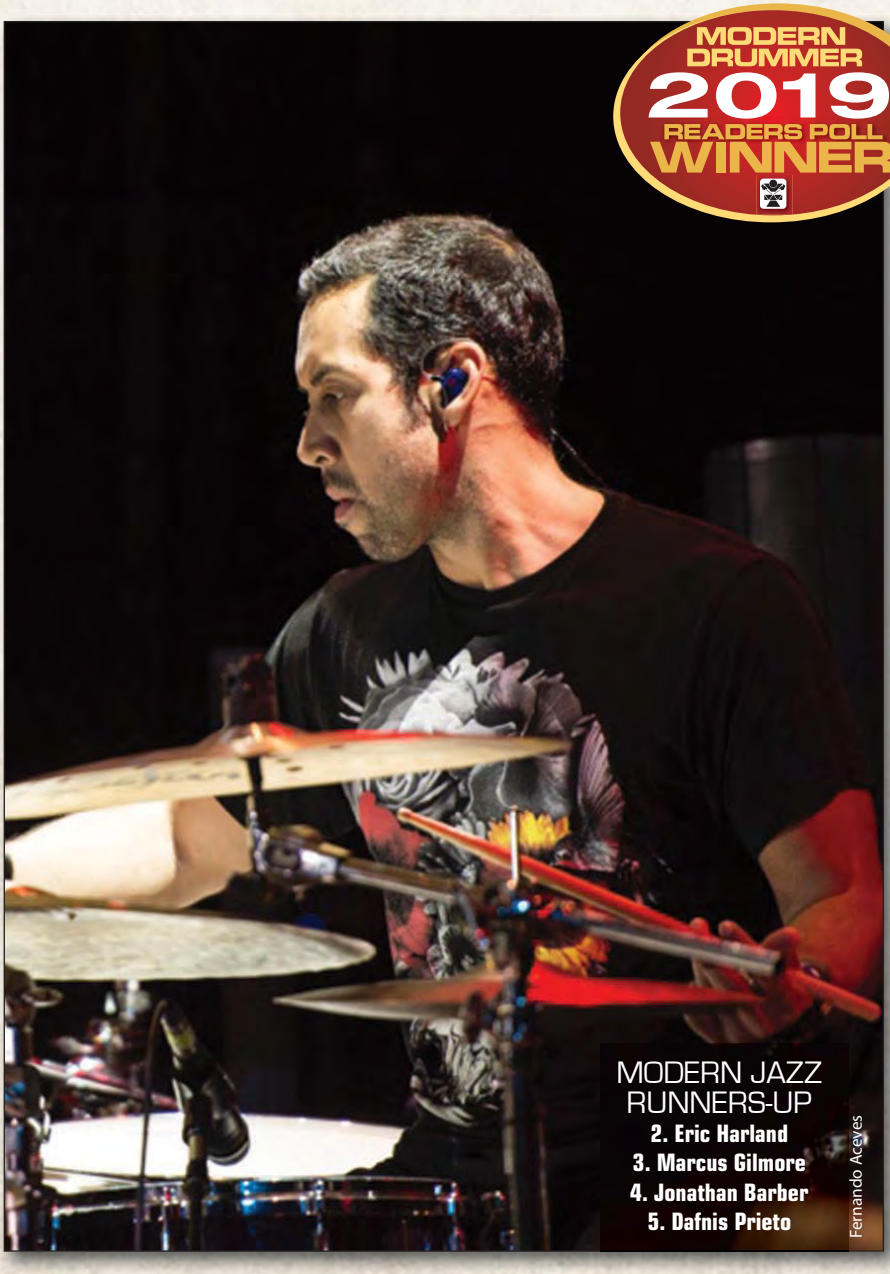
PROGRESSIVE
Gavin Harrison
(King Crimson)

"I think we're getting to third or fourth base.... First base is where you can just play the part. You don't play it well, but you can play it. Second base is when you can play it in time and things are starting to come together. Third base is when you're now free enough to not worry about the articulation of what you have to play. You can start listening to the other guys and how they're playing. And fourth base is where you can play the song inside out, backwards, forwards, without even thinking. You can listen to the other guys, watch the other guys, even start thinking about abstract things." (February 2015)

Rahav Segev

MODERN JAZZ

Antonio Sanchez



FAVES' FAVES

"My very first influence was **Ringo**. My mom used to listen to a lot of really good music, especially rock 'n' roll, including the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. And besides Ringo and **Charlie Watts**, she really liked Cream, and she used to say that I would roll around in her womb whenever **Ginger Baker** played a fill. [laughs]

"My next guys are **John Bonham**, **Stewart Copeland**, and **Neil Peart**. One thing all those guys had in common was an incredibly identifiable sound. You hear two bars and you know it's Ginger or Bonzo or Copeland or Peart. Obviously the bands they were in had a lot to do with it, because the music was so great.

"One of the most refreshing rock drum records I've heard in a while is Beck's *Morning Phase*, which won the Grammy two or three years ago. Most of the recording is so lush with strings, and Beck's voice has so much reverb on it, but the drums are super dry. And they sound really old. I looked up the drummer on it, **Joey Waronker**, because I didn't know who it was. I listen to it a lot. You can tell they just let the drum sound be.

"But after Neil Peart I got into my fusion phase—**Dave Weckl**, **Vinnie Colaiuta**, **Dennis Chambers**, **Steve Gadd**. Coming from rock, I never heard drumming like that. It had elements that I liked from rock—big, punchy sound, but played in such a virtuosic, polyrhythmic way. Technically they inspired me to push my own boundaries. I stayed there for a while, then I discovered **Tony Williams**; the first album I heard was *My Funny Valentine + Four and More*. It was a different kind of virtuosity and my entry into what I really wanted to explore in terms of jazz. And then of course all the other greats—**Max Roach**, **Roy Haynes**, who I've always loved. **Art Blakey**. **Philly Joe Jones** for the language. Of course **Buddy Rich**, just a beast. And then the Latin guys, **Ignacio Berroa** and **Horacio Hernandez,** were big influences. **Changuito**, a lot of the Cuban guys. The rumba bands. **Paula Braga** and **Portinho** for Brazilian. There are so many, I just wanted to hear it all. And now I feel it all in *here* when I'm playing. Little bits and pieces of all these people."

For more with Antonio, go to moderndrummer.com.

FUSION
Simon Phillips

"The Protocol material is very demanding instrumental fusion music. It can become exhausting for some musicians playing this type of complex music night after night. The *Protocol 4* release is a big step forward for me compositionally. My entire career, I've always chosen the risky, more musical route. It was probably not the wisest financial decision at times. But, frankly, I'd rather play great music than make lots of money. I feel musically rejuvenated after making this record."
(July 2018)

Francesco Demmelle

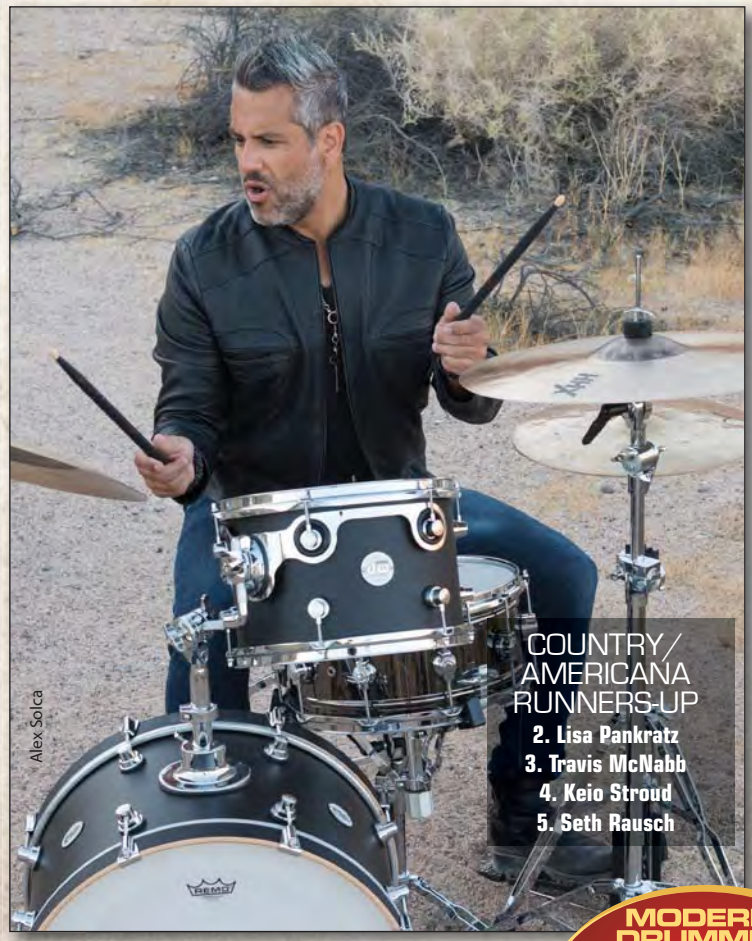
FUSION
RUNNERS-UP
2. Nate Smith
3. Gergo Borlai
4. Zach Danziger
5. Michael Mitchell

MODERN DRUMMER
2019
READERS POLL
WINNER

POP
RUNNERS-UP
2. Eric Hernandez
3. Mark Schulman
4. Drew Shoals
5. Karl Brazil

POP
Tony Royster Jr.
(Katy Perry)

"Pretty much anything that you hear, electronics or whatever, I'm triggering. I call my set a booby trap, because any extra hit of those sounds that are triggered from my drums and, oh *man*, it's a crazy situation. And the sounds aren't like little snare drums. These are big-ass sounds from the record, like a big snare. Most drummers aren't used to playing triggers, because they're so used to doing ghost notes, things of that nature. There are no ghost notes in this type of music. You do a ghost note, it can be the end of your career playing triggers. If I'm playing a very simple pattern that just requires four on the floor and 2 and 4 on the snare, I can do some intertwining percussion parts. It's a dope situation. [But] there's really no drum tracks left in the Pro Tools. So if I stop playing, you'll know for sure."
(April 2018)

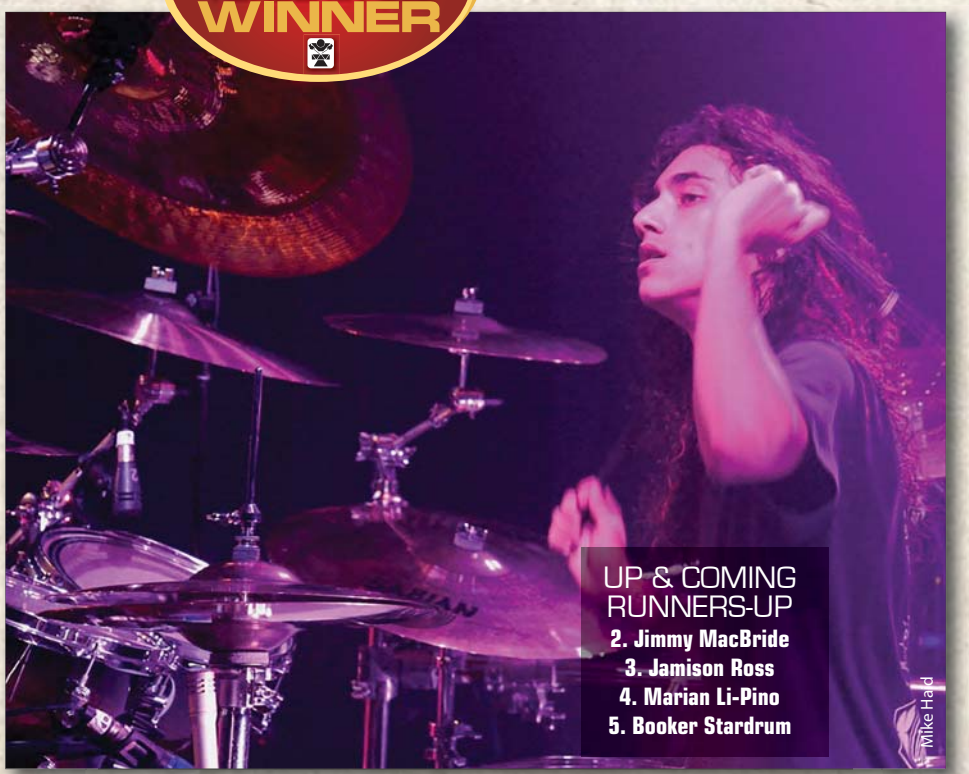


Alex Solca

COUNTRY/AMERICANA
Rich Redmond
(Jason Aldean)

"What makes for a great drum track? A memorable beat, a killer groove, musical choices, and staying out of the way. The groove is the muscle of the song. The connective tissue is the appropriate fill coming in and out of each section of the song. Then the finishing touches consist of scrubbing and/or gridding the tracks to really lock them all in as tightly as possible to create that unstoppable, impenetrable groove that makes it a radio hit. The last two Aldean records were heavily mixed with modern technology. As you grow as an artist, you also have to grow with the technology, to keep up with the industry standards for making hit records. You have to go into the studio with the confidence to know what a song needs, and then deliver the goods. You also have to be humble enough to take directions."
(December 2018)

MODERN DRUMMER 2019 READERS POLL WINNER



Mike Hald

UP & COMING
Max Portnoy

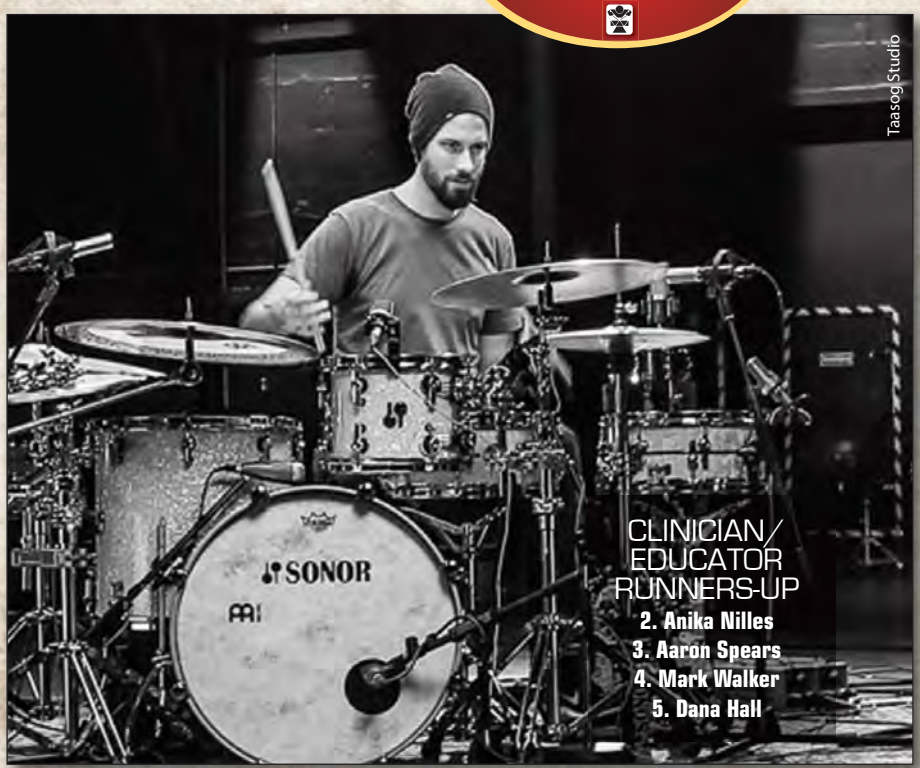
"Todd Schied at the California Drum Shop in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, has been teaching me since I was about five years old. He teaches me every style of music, from jazz to prog to metal to African and Brazilian rhythms. He always shows me challenging things to keep me growing. I [also] learned a lot from watching my dad on tour and in the studio. Playing drums is what I've wanted to do my entire life, and my dad has inspired me more than anyone to follow my dreams."
(May 2018)

WORLD
Kiko Freitas

FAVES' FAVES

"My top drummers in terms of influence would be **Elvin Jones**, **Buddy Rich**, **Colin Bailey**, **Wilson das Neves**, **Dave Weckl**, and **Vinnie Colaiuta**. In these giants of drums I can find the feeling, swing, technique, and the real art of playing the drumset."

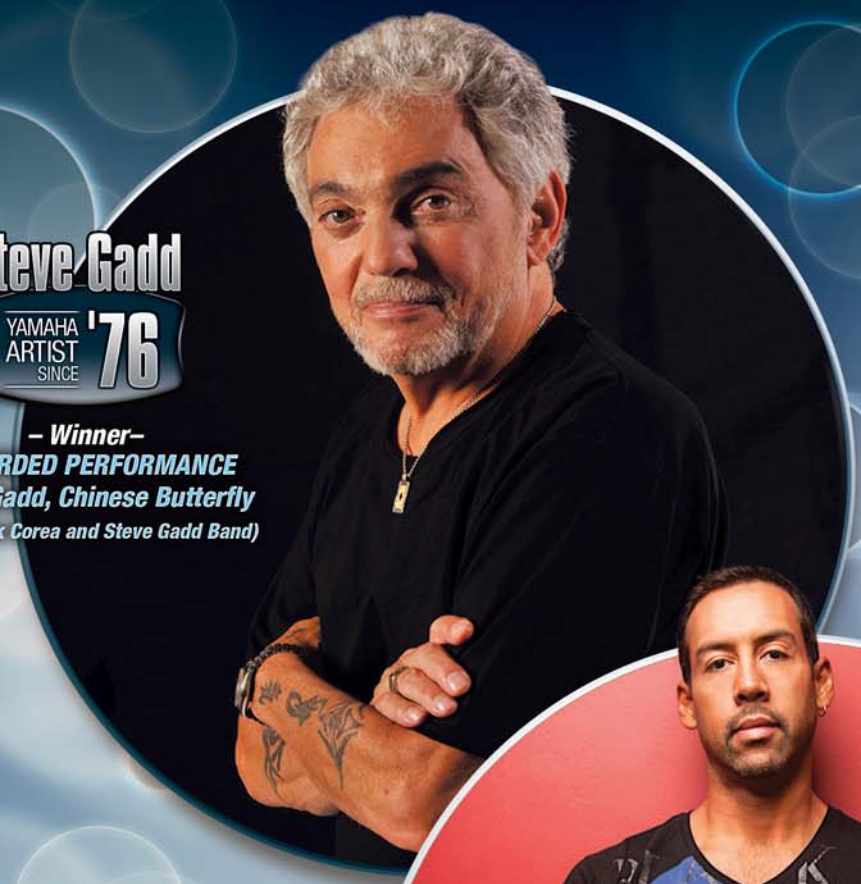
MODERN DRUMMER 2019 READERS POLL WINNER



CLINICIAN/ EDUCATOR
Benny Greb

"[My] first recording—that's when I figured out that things can sound drastically different from how they feel while you're playing, to the positive and to the negative. Sometimes you can beat yourself up and then you realize it's not that bad. But then there's the other way around, where you're thinking, This is great! But when you listen back to the recording it's horrible. When that happens, you have to ask what's horrible. Oh...the fills speed up. Why do they speed up? Maybe it's because I hold my breath or I stop the motion of my body. What's comforting is that these are not things that take forever. Once you think about them, you'll sound different immediately." (June 2015)

YAMAHA



Steve Gadd

YAMAHA ARTIST SINCE '76

– Winner–
RECORDED PERFORMANCE
Steve Gadd, Chinese Butterfly
(The Chick Corea and Steve Gadd Band)

Antonio Sanchez

YAMAHA ARTIST SINCE '01

– Winner–
MODERN JAZZ

MODERN DRUMMER 2019 READERS POLL

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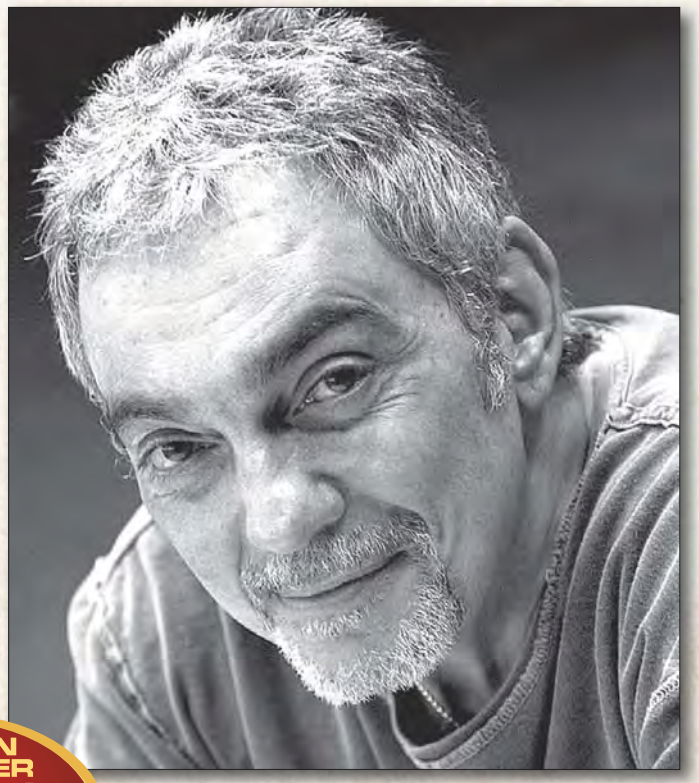
Choose Yamaha.

Yamaha Drums is privileged to be associated with winners, Steve Gadd and Antonio Sanchez, who have inspired countless musicians and artists over the years.

RECORDED PERFORMANCE

Steve Gadd,
Chinese Butterfly
(The Chick Corea and Steve Gadd Band)



RECORDED PERFORMANCE RUNNERS-UP

2. Elvin Jones, *Both Directions at Once* (John Coltrane)
3. Nate Smith, *The Fearless Flyers* (The Fearless Flyers)
4. Brann Dailor, *Emperor of Sand* (Mastodon)
5. Jean-Paul Gaster, *Book of Bad Decisions* (Clutch)

MODERN DRUMMER 2019 READERS POLL WINNER

EDUCATIONAL PRODUCT

Aaron Sterling,
Sounds of Sterloid Vol. II
(online master class)

Scott Liken

EDUCATIONAL PRODUCT RUNNERS-UP

2. Jost Nickel, *Jost Nickel's Fill Book*
3. Gregory "Torch" Sgrulloni, *Trap Style Drumming* (book)
4. Mark Colenburg, *The Beat Matrix Unlocked* (book)
5. Claus Hessler, *Camp Duty Update* (book)

REMO CONGRATULATES OUR 2019
READERS POLL WINNERS

STUDIO
MATT CHAMBERLAIN
AARON STERLING
BLAIR SINTA

CLASSIC ROCK
TODD SUCHERMAN
MICK FLEETWOOD
NICK MASON
TICO TORRES
RUSS KUNKEL

MODERN ROCK
TAYLOR HAWKINS
JEFF FRIEDL

EXPERIMENTAL ROCK
JASON MCGERR

METAL
AARON GILLESPIE
BLAKE RICHARDSON

UP & COMING
JAMISON ROSS

PROGRESSIVE
GAVIN HARRISON
MIKE MANGINI
CARL PALMER
VIRGIL DONATI

R&B/FUNK/HIPHOP
SONNY EMORY
TONY "RICO" NICHOLS

CLASSIC JAZZ
ULYSSES OWENS JR.
MATT WILSON

MODERN JAZZ
ANTONIO SANCHEZ
ERIC HARLAND
MARCUS GILMORE

FUSION
SIMON PHILLIPS
GERGO BORLAI
ZACH DANZIGER
MIKE MITCHELL

= CATEGORY WINNER

POP
TONY ROYSTER JR.
ERIC HERNANDEZ
MARK SCHULMAN
DREW SHOALS
KARL BRAZIL

COUNTRY/AMERICAN
RICH REDMOND
TRAVIS MCNABB

CLINICIAN/EDUCATOR
BENNY GREB
AARON SPEARS
MARK WALKER

EDUCATIONAL PRODUCT
AARON STERLING
JOST NICKEL
MARK COLENBURG

RECORDER PERFORMANCE
STEVE GADD

WORLD
RANJIT BAROT

REMO®

Morgan Ågren

Story by Ken Micallef
Photos by Elliot Elliot

His work with Frank Zappa, the Crimson ProjeKCt, Fredrik Thordendal, Bill Laswell, and the way forward-looking Mats/Morgan duo has been blowing us away for a couple decades now. Yet all that time, he's never been predictable, never repeated himself, never had a "thing"—and maybe that's why we love him most.

The career of Swedish drummer Morgan Ågren is proof that you needn't adhere to typical scenarios to forge a unique professional path. With his childhood friend, keyboard player Mats Öberg, Ågren founded the Mats/Morgan Band, making some of the most arresting, daring, and enjoyable music this side of Frank Zappa and Allan Holdsworth. More striking, he began doing this when he was barely a teenager.

Influenced by minimalism pioneer Steve Reich, French prog innovators Magma, American outrock legend Captain Beefheart, and fusion architects Return to Forever, the Mats/Morgan Band plays demanding yet playful music that relies equally on Ågren's deft, complex drumming, Öberg's significant keyboard skills, and both men's exploratory compositions. The duo has released ten albums since 1996, including their latest, an ambitious CD/DVD package featuring the Norrlandsoperan Symphony Orchestra.

Ågren's 2015 solo release, *Batterie Deluxe*, is a landmark recording of live and programmed drums, spoken word, and synths. Eschewing flash and fireworks for deeply drenched pocket drumming, Ågren creates rhythms that are spellbinding in their complexity, yet somehow soothing to the ear. Morgan's work on the album *Sol Niger Within* by Fredrik Thordendal of Meshuggah, Bill Laswell's *BLIXT* project, Devin Townsend's *Casualties of Cool* and *Empath*, and Manugen's *Maximum Times* have provided inspiration to many an adventure-minded drummer looking for an earful of fresh ideas—though not necessarily in a chopsy context.

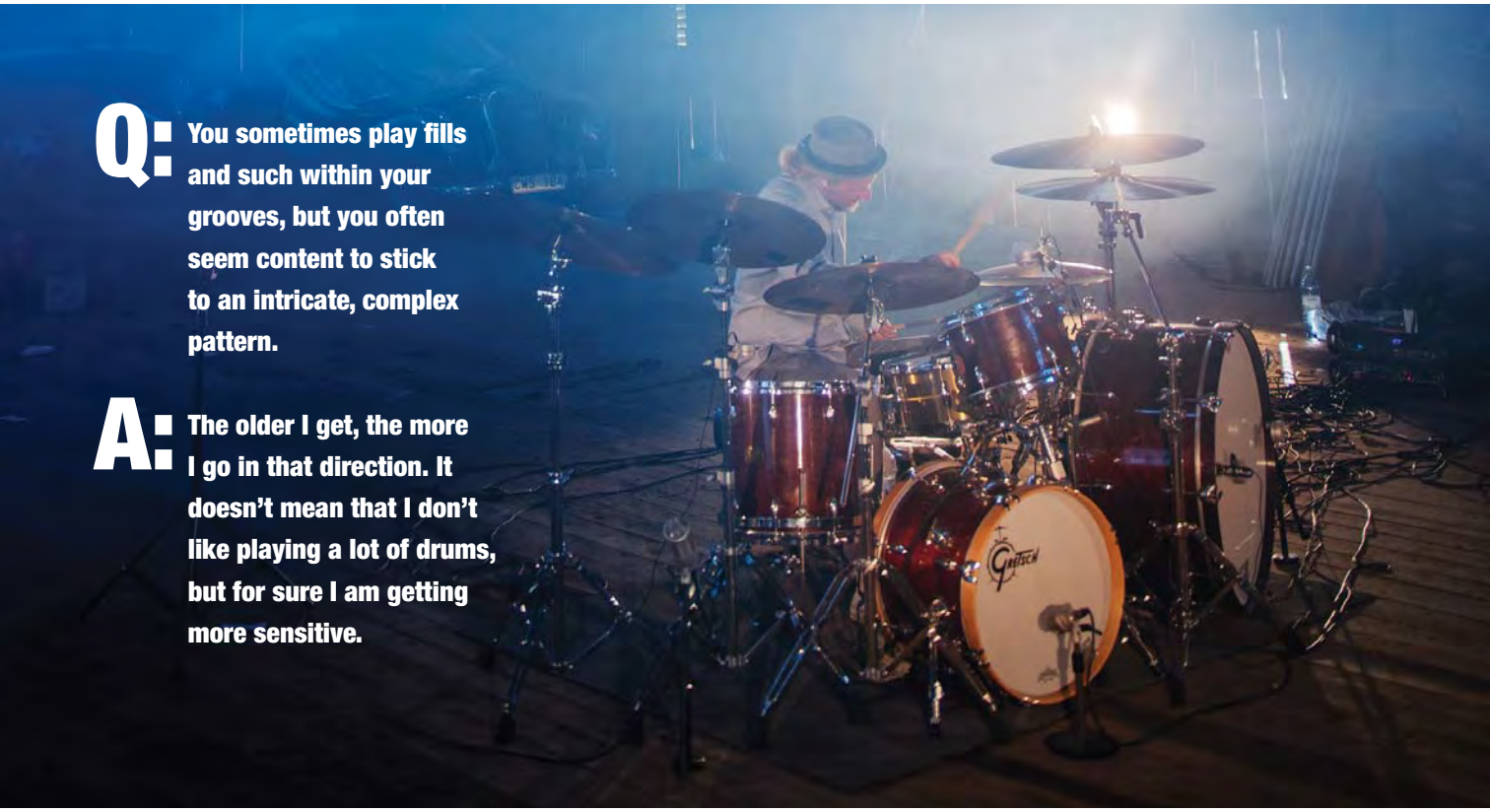
"It all comes down to the music," says Morgan. "To play what is needed in the music, just that. Maybe that's one shaker and no drumkit; maybe it's a double kick with ten thousand drum fills. Whatever makes the music sound good *is* good. And for me, if I listen to something and I'm not really enjoying the music, then it doesn't help very much if someone is playing awesome things on their instrument. I want good *music*, not just playing skills."

MD: You don't play many drum solos, and even though your drumming is often complex, there's not a lot of embellishment.
Morgan: If I compose something that doesn't require any drums, I will not play on it. My only goal is to make good music. On YouTube everyone is younger and faster than the other, and there is a lot of repetition. I'm happy that I didn't have the internet when I grew up; in a way it's a fantastic source, but at the same time it seems that everything is more the same because of it, because of YouTube. As soon as somebody does something that gets many likes on YouTube, ten million drummers come and do the same thing. When I was a kid, I did the same thing, but it was still a bit different. I listened to Billy Cobham and imitated him. But I would get a VHS copy of *Mahavishnu Orchestra Live*; it felt like I was the only one in Europe who had a copy of it! It felt more unique back then.

When I was fifteen or eighteen or even twenty-two, I had different views on things. When I was ten years old and I bought my first Buddy Rich album, I only cared about the drum solos. But now, thirty-five years later, it's almost the opposite. It's not that I don't like solo drums, but I'm looking for other things than just that.
MD: Some of the influences I hear in your music include Steve Reich and Frank Zappa.
Morgan: Yes, and electronic music has influenced me a lot, and Allan Holdsworth, Mahavishnu Orchestra, King Crimson, Magma. When Mats and I met, he was only ten years old, and I was fourteen. His parents were into music and had a big vinyl collection. So every time we met I borrowed vinyl that I thought looked interesting. That's how I found Gino Vannelli and Zappa. I also introduced music to Mats, such as Holdsworth and Return to Forever. We discovered all this music when we were very young.
MD: Did you come from a musical family?
Morgan: My father played violin and sang, but nobody played drums or this type music. Mats and I come from a town called Umeå in Sweden. Mats/Morgan began in 1981, just piano and drums, and we composed everything together. We moved to Stockholm in the late '80s and began composing separately, then meeting and recording. We still compose separately. Mats was two years old when he began listening to music. He was born blind, and music and sound was everything for him. At five, Mats was listening to Miles Davis and Mahavishnu. He's self-taught on piano by just listening to his parents' huge record collection from a very early age.

Recording Magma's "Zess"

MD: How did you come to record "Zess" with Magma?
Morgan: It's still a little bit of a mystery. I met Christian Vander, the drummer and founder of Magma, in 2000, when they had a thirty-year anniversary. I met Christian after the gig and we connected. Then I found an excuse to go to Paris to see them again. I emailed *Modern Drummer* and offered to do a story on Christian, and the editor at the time, Bill Miller, accepted my offer. Christian has some incredible stories about when he grew up; he met Elvin Jones when he was ten years old. Christian is not impossible to interview, but I don't think he grants many. So this was a good excuse for me to see Christian again, and when Magma scheduled another gig in Paris, I booked a meeting with him.
MD: What happened more recently with Magma?
Morgan: Magma came to Sweden in 2015, and Mats and I opened for them. This year is the band's fifty-year anniversary, and they're planning some rereleases. They also wanted to rerecord a classic Magma song with Christian singing, so they asked me if I wanted to track the song "Zess" with them, saying Christian can sing and I can drum, and record it live in the studio. The song is twenty-five minutes long.
MD: How would you describe the music?
Morgan: It has chords repeating forever with a few breaks. And a lot of spoken word by Christian in the beginning; the words are like the building blocks. At the recording



Q: You sometimes play fills and such within your grooves, but you often seem content to stick to an intricate, complex pattern.

A: The older I get, the more I go in that direction. It doesn't mean that I don't like playing a lot of drums, but for sure I am getting more sensitive.

session was Magma's bass player, Philippe Bussonnet, plus Christian Vander, a piano player, and then Stella Vander, the vocalist. There were no charts, but they sent sound files in advance. We performed the track live in the studio with Christian singing with us.

MD: How did you approach the drumming?

Morgan: It was quite hard because the song is fast and very quiet. The pattern is not far away from the classic Billy Cobham song "Quadrant 4." If you remove a bit of the bass drum, the action is based more in the hands and at a very low volume. It's kind of a very fast shuffle. It's not the tempo that's hard, but when you play the same thing for twenty minutes it can be difficult. You don't want to loop anything, and you don't want to lose the beat. And with it being twenty minutes long, you don't want to mess things up two minutes before the end and have to redo everything. So it was a big challenge.

MD: Did Christian have any comments or ideas about the drumming?

Morgan: I felt he trusted me. Also, I sent the band some simple recordings from my studio with ideas for parts. I needed to get that confirmed before going to the studio. We did two or three versions.

Grooving with Electronics

MD: *Batterie Deluxe* knocked out me and many other drummers the first time we heard it—the songs, the rhythms, the electronics.

Morgan: Thank you. There are also guest spots from Mats, Neyveli Radhakrishna, Simon Steensland, Devin Townsend, and Fredrik Thordendal from Meshuggah. I composed all the music and built up the sound. There are programmed drums and acoustic drums, never any triggers. I use Pro Tools as my software and my own samples. So it's live drums plus some computerized parts, but always keeping the acoustic sound.

MD: What is your process for making drums groove with electronics?

Morgan: I just hear things in my head and try to find that vibe and that atmosphere. Sometimes, in order to achieve that, I'll do something completely different. I can't read music very well. But I have everything in my mind. On *Batterie Deluxe* I sampled electronic accordions, and I chopped them up in my computer. One bass sound is a synthesizer bass mixed with one of my son's toy guitars attached to his toy speakerphone. It sounded incredible.

MD: Do you try to groove right down the middle when playing with electronics?

Morgan: I don't think there is something that I keep doing the same. So it's hard to say. And usually the drums are the very last thing. That's true with Mats/Morgan Band as well. When I compose music I'm standing behind my computer. I never really play drums except when there is recording, performance, or teaching in my music room. But from when I was five years to twenty I played drums a lot—probably every day, sometimes many hours every day.

MD: What are you playing on "Yläjärvi" from *Batterie Deluxe*?

Morgan: That has an opening section with a bar that repeats. Then on the second part, a half-tempo groove. And then in the third I play on a homemade instrument, a wooden plank with one thick piano string attached, which I hit with a drumstick. That creates a very low-pitched bass type of sound.

MD: There are weird spoken-word passages throughout the album. One sounds like William Burroughs.

Morgan: One of the spoken-word passages is a student of mind who has been diagnosed with a disorder. His caretakers sometimes let him play drums with me because it makes him feel good. It's like therapy. He told me that he spoke Russian, so I had him record a piece of music where he improvised in Russian. It made him super happy. The only thing I told him before we recorded was, "Try to sound scary," and it came out great.

Complex, Not Crazy

MD: You sometimes play fills and such within your grooves, but you often seem content to stick to an intricate, complex pattern.

Morgan: The older I get, the more I go in that direction. It doesn't mean that I don't like playing a lot of drums, but for sure I am getting more sensitive. If you go to a drum festival, it's quite hard to experience great music. You hear great drummers, but usually the music comes in last. It's almost like nobody cares that much about the music; everyone is more focused on the skills.

MD: Are most of your grooves based on linear patterns?

Morgan: I never really thought about that, but I do play hands in unison.

MD: Then what is their origin, as you have a very distinctive, rhythmic pattern-based approach?

Morgan: It comes from the records I loved growing up: Captain Beefheart's *Lick My Decals Off, Baby*, with drummer John French, Magma's *Live* with Christian Vander, Brecker

Ågren's Setup

Drums: Gretsch mid-'70s Dark Walnut
- 6.5x14 Gretsch bell brass snare drum
- 8x12 tom
- 14x14 floor tom
- 14x28 bass drum
- 14x18 bass drum

Cymbals: Istanbul Agop
- 15" 30th Anniversary hi-hat
- 26" 30th Anniversary ride
- 22" Traditional Dark crash
- 22" 30th Anniversary ride
- 20" 30th Anniversary ride
- 24" 30th Anniversary ride

Heads: Remo, including Ambassador Coated snare, tom, and bass drum batters and 18" bass drum resonant, Ambassador Clear tom resonants, and Ambassador Smooth White resonant on 28" bass drum

Sticks: Wincent 5A XL sticks and wire brushes

Hardware: DW

Electronics: Clavia Nord Drum 3P, Ehrlund microphones

Accessories: CRS Cymbal Resonance System, Porter & Davies Throne, Auris GigPig

Brothers' *Heavy Metal Bebop* and Frank Zappa's *In New York*, both Terry Bozzio, Ronald Shannon Jackson's *Pulse*, Bill Bruford's *One of a Kind*, Return to Forever's *Romantic Warrior* with Lenny White, Allan Holdsworth's *I.O.U.* with Gary Husband. As soon as I heard those albums, I didn't even want to go to music school. I just wanted to play along with the albums. *Romantic Warrior*, hearing that album at, like, fourteen—it was incredible. With Holdsworth, I particularly liked Gary Husband on *I.O.U.* That album is so free. I loved Tony Williams for the same reason, because it was dirty, wild, and strong. Gary Husband had that vibe—whatever he did, it was like he was playing it for the first time. And I had all those live Zappa bootlegs with Vinnie Colaiuta. His very best stuff. And Christian's work with Magma goes way beyond being a technically skilled drummer—he created an entire language. That means more than all the technical skills in the world.

Mats/Morgan Meets Norrlandsoperan Symphony Orchestra

MD: How did *Mats/Morgan Live with Norrlandsoperan Symphony Orchestra* come to be?

Morgan: This is a symphony orchestra from our hometown in Umeå. They contacted us to compose music for the orchestra and our band. It's three of Mats' old tracks, and I composed the rest. I spent roughly a year to get the music together, then gave it to an arranger to be notated. I have a sampler with all the orchestral sounds, and I composed with my keyboard.

MD: What were the recording challenges?

Morgan: I decided early on we wouldn't do anything that would be too complicated to perform, but once again most of the stuff that I do just happens. I can't control what I do every time. So sometimes I'm playing something complicated, even if that wasn't the original intent. There were a couple of parts that were really hard for the orchestra.

"Klerpan" was a nightmare. I had to make a lot of edits in order to use it on the album. Orchestral musicians have the tonality, the colors, and as long as they have a strict path they're okay. But if you're playing a strict 4/4 and add a pattern in 7/8, they can get lost in seconds. There were some rhythmic problems, but overall I was happy.

MD: Your drumming in "Elka Dacapo" is very interesting. It's in 6/4, and the drums sound sampled and live. It burns from one section to the next.

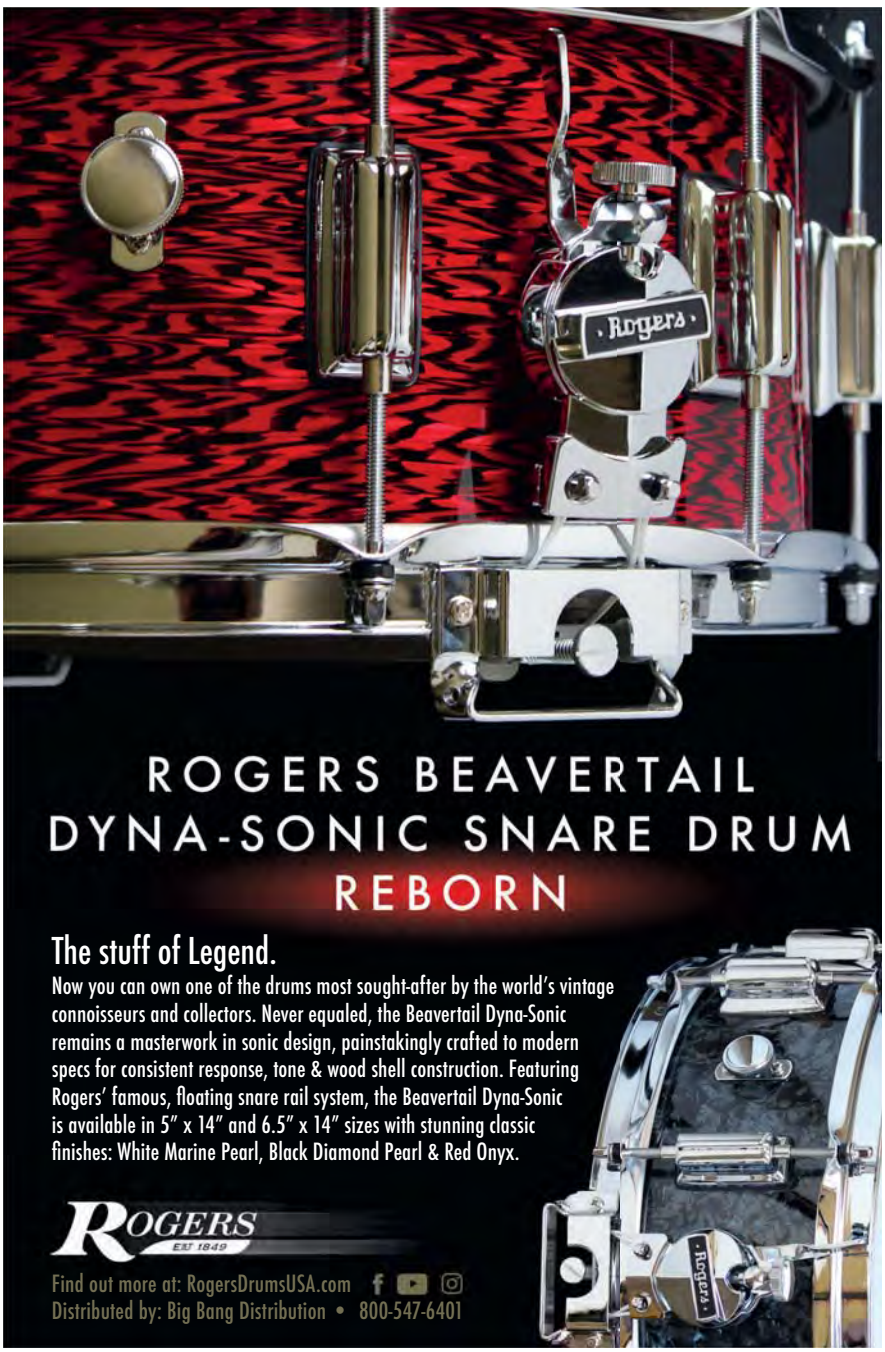
Morgan: I'm just following the samples. I sampled an old electronic organ, and each sample is in a different tempo; each sample moves at a different speed. So the music made me play like that.

MD: You may be an unschooled drummer, but you're clearly gifted.

Morgan: Thank you. I can play things as long as I can decide how to do it. I can play ideas that could be considered complicated, but if somebody asks me, "Can you do it like this instead?" or "Can you move your hand from this drum to this drum instead?" then everything can just collapse. I'm not flexible at all.

MD: Do you have broad goals as a musician?

Morgan: Many musicians know me and send thumbs ups and appreciations from all over the world. But it can be tough making a living as a musician today. I have a family, a house, two dogs, a son and a wife, bills…. If I was a single guy living in a small flat, it might be easier. Being in the arts isn't always easy. But I love what I do and I feel like a millionaire in my heart and in my experiences. I'm fortunate. That is worth more than any money, so I hope to be able to keep doing that.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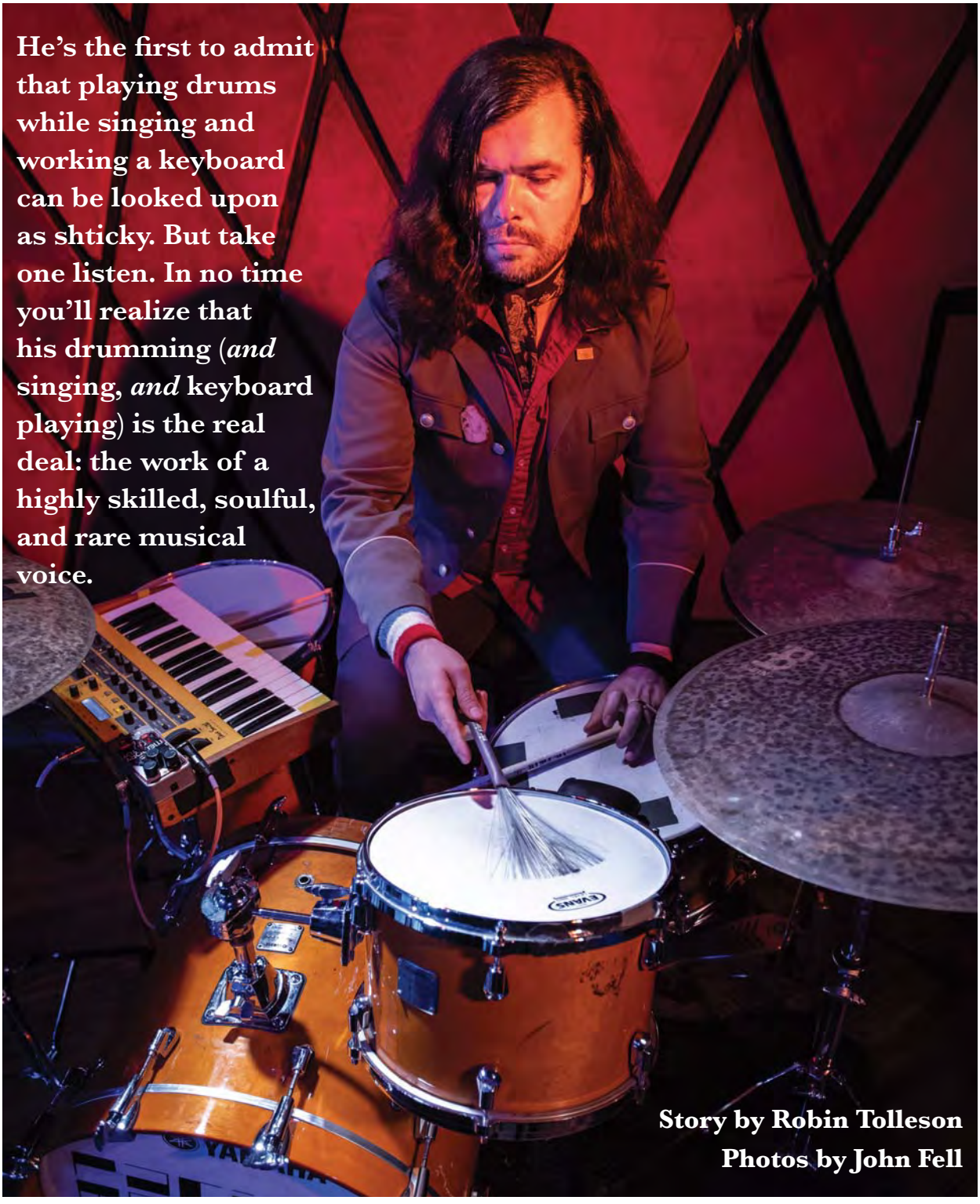
Paris_Monster's Josh Dion



He's the first to admit that playing drums while singing and working a keyboard can be looked upon as shticky. But take one listen. In no time you'll realize that his drumming (*and* singing, *and* keyboard playing) is the real deal: the work of a highly skilled, soulful, and rare musical voice.

Story by Robin Tolleson
Photos by John Fell

As drummers continue to push the independence envelope, New York-based multi-instrumentalist Josh Dion has been honing his own unique slant on the concept with Paris_Monster, his alt-rock duo with bassist Geoff Kraly. Dion's left hand controls the group's rhythmic pulse with sticks and mallets on the drums, delivering solid backbeats, nuanced ghost-note patterns, and one-handed cymbal rolls, while his right hand navigates bass or clavinet-like parts on keyboard. His bona-fide soul-stirring vocals rise above the atmospherics that he and Kraly stir up.

Dion has been inspired by many of history's great singing drummers, including Earth, Wind & Fire's Maurice White. "Old-school players," he says, "like Levon Helm, Phil Collins, Buddy Miles—I love Ringo. I want to be a real epic performer, so the drumming underneath is maybe more wild than the people I'm talking about. I want to be like a singing Keith Moon—like if Keith Moon and Bobby Bland were one person. When I'm playing full-on drumset, I want it to have that epic kind of energy."

Sideman gigs over the past decade with Chuck Loeb, Bill Evans, Candy Dulfer, Wayne Krantz, Esperanza Spalding, and the Weight, and particularly an ongoing stint with guitarist Jim Campilongo, have given the drummer confidence and visibility on the kit. But it wasn't until the founding of Paris_Monster, who've just released their debut album, *Lamplight*, that his keyboard and vocal talents saw the spotlight.

Dion grew up in Storrs, Connecticut, in the rural eastern part of the state, also home to the University of Connecticut. He took advantage of the school's music program and the scene it generated; he was also fortunate to have good teachers—not to mention a father who played pretty good rudimental drums himself. Dion was given a kit at the age of three and never looked back. We begin our chat with the drummer by asking about those formative years.

Josh: Drumming was always a thing. My earliest musical crushes were Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, the Beatles, Cream…. I remember my older brother introducing me to Cream's *Wheels of Fire*, which I still listen to. I loved Pink Floyd too; there was something about the mood of the music. Nick Mason and Ringo Starr, their language made a lot of sense to me. It's more melodic and kind of 8th-note-y.

I used to just practice to records. My dad never forced me. I could have used a little discipline, but I really just grew up with a huge record collection and a drumset. And I remember clues. I remember when I couldn't do a double-stroke roll correctly, and then I remember the day when it just really clicked, and all of a sudden I'm like, *Oh my god, I can play a roll.* And that's how it was with me. I would struggle with something and then I would become enlightened.

MD: Was it about reaching a certain level of muscle memory, or was it a conscious thing?

Josh: I think it was both. It's strange—and to me almost mystic—how you can learn something at a young age, and then take it for granted when you're older that you just know it. And that's why I think it's especially important for children, because when you're a kid those are the years when those things shape in you. I know there are things in my drumming that exist because of that time in my life, and I don't even realize it.

MD: You mentioned finding "clues."

Josh: Yeah, clues. I enjoyed practicing to Gene Krupa stuff because it was simple and it swung and it felt great. Gene Krupa was my longtime hero. I watched that movie *The Gene Krupa Story* [1959], with Sal Mineo, so many times, I think that I could recite the whole thing. I listened to Krupa's recordings with Benny Goodman and his own band, and that was my introduction to jazz. Krupa led me to other heavyweight drummers, like Buddy Rich, Papa Jo, Cozy Cole, and Baby Dodds. I would cut out pictures of musicians and make superhero posters of, like, Baby Dodds.

MD: When did you first get to play with other people?

Josh: In the fourth grade there was a school band, and a fantastic teacher, Kathryn Niemasik. She called my house and said, "Josh is doing really good at the drums; why doesn't he come in and play with this beginning concert band?" That was my first time playing with a conductor, and I had no clue about what it was to start and stop a song, to watch somebody, to listen. She taught me vibraphone, piano. She nurtured my talent and featured me on drum solos. She taught me about music. I know all my diminished scales because of her, and can rip the blues scale in all twelve keys. She knew I was into jazz, so we used to check out Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller. She was a real advocate, so that was huge for me. And when I was going through dumb stuff that kids go through, they hooked me up with a college ensemble. Here I am, a twelve-year-old kid, and they put me in the lowest-level college jazz ensemble. I had never seen an 18" bass drum; I had never heard bebop. I hadn't made it to Charlie Parker yet, and I was transcribing Philly Joe, Max Roach, Art Blakey, Roy Haynes, and trying to figure out what Elvin Jones and Tony Williams were doing.

Around the age of thirteen, I got involved in a Pentecostal church in a neighboring town. The church wasn't heavy on drums, so I switched to piano, and it forced me to start playing piano in front of people. There was some Canadian country music, some bluegrass, and there was a very solid black gospel vibe. Those two things really spoke to me, especially the gospel

singers. I remember listening to them and thinking, *Could I ever sing like this?* The emotion—it was so joyful, and wretched at the same time, because you're talking about pain. And I realized, when I started to play improvisational music and epic music, that same energy flows through musicians. Music can have all those different colors and all those different emotions and moods, and we can capture that in our drumming and our writing and whatever sound we want our band to have.

MD: You're talking about something in the music that's beyond the talent.

Josh: Yeah, we practice, we want to play fast, but more than anything it's like, *Can I be honest and happy with myself, and can I create something with other people?* It's the unity of playing together that is stronger and makes that thing happen.

MD: So did you do the garage band thing in high school?

Josh: In high school I was listening to gospel, and then I got into funk. I was working at a pizza place doing dishes, and I remember they put on Earth, Wind & Fire's *Greatest Hits* in the back. I went ballistic for funk music! I became the funk guy. I bought every record that I could. I got a funk radio show on the local college radio station. Funkadelic, Sly & the Family Stone, Tower of Power…. Earth, Wind & Fire was my favorite, because it was a bridge from spirituality to secular music. [EWF's] Maurice White, Freddie White, Ralph Johnson, Philip Bailey—they were all drummers as well as singers. There was this heavy drum element to the music, and it was a culmination of jazz fusion and world music, which was really cool.

MD: I first heard you with the funk/fusion band ulu.

Josh: I had the drum instructional video *In the Pocket*, with Dennis Chambers, and I got deep into Dennis and the different things that he talked about, the Meters, Funkadelic, and Scofield. That led me to the Yellowjackets, to Weather Report. I used to watch Dave Weckl, thinking, *What the hell is going on?* And I was still too young to really understand what a simple, medium-greasy groove meant. My pocket was still not quite there. I didn't have the life to really understand what a groove was, but I was doing the best I could at the time.

Q: You're talking about something in the music that's beyond the talent.

A: We practice, we want to play fast, but more than anything it's like, *Can I be honest and happy with myself, and can I create something with other people?* It's the unity of playing together that is stronger and makes that thing happen.

I started to apply to colleges to go to jazz school, and I got into William Paterson in New Jersey. It was good to be around like-minded musicians, folks like Mark Guiliana, Tyshawn Sorey, and Jaimeo Brown—so many good drummers and amazing musicians. I was doing jazz gigs, restaurant gigs, and then I got the gig with ulu. They're a jam band, from a Herbie Hancock Headhunters kind of vibe. So I left school and went on the road. I remember being in the van, and other people in the band were writing songs. I started keeping a journal. I was about twenty-three, and I remember thinking, *I'm not just a jazz drummer anymore—I want to be a songwriter who sings and plays drums*.

MD: When did the idea of Paris_Monster come about, where you would be splitting yourself in half?

Josh: I always had piano skills, but I started to make these videos on Facebook, playing chords while I would sing and play drums, and people started to respond to them. The other half of Paris_Monster, Geoff Kraly, had been writing songs and was playing the bass in a really unusual way, more guitar-istic. He was into pedals and had gotten into modular synths. I'd started to mess around with playing keys and drums, and I realized that the synth bass was actually one step away from drums. I would listen to a D-Train song, and I'd be like, *I can play what the rhythm section is playing*. The drums are keeping a simple beat, the synth bass is playing the bass line, and it's all syncopated. So I started to mess around with playing both parts and singing over the top. I started to feel like, *This is it, man; this is a groove.*

So we decided to mess around, just the two of us playing. I was really self-conscious about it. I thought everybody was going to think this is just showboat-y, which it kind of is. But people I look up to in the New York music scene…Dave Fiuczynski came to a show one time and was like, "Yo, Paris_ Monster!" I remember being like, *He thinks it's cool! Okay, we've got to see what this is.* And we started to home in on it.

MD: Was it challenging independence-wise?

Josh: The drums stay pretty simple. I'm keeping a 2 and 4 for the most part, and my ghost notes need to be strong. I've still got the same structure of a groove; I'm just playing a bass line instead of a complicated ride cymbal pattern or something. If you think of the way that David Garibaldi plays, he has a four-beat pattern, and you know, you're protecting a pattern in that feel. And that's also, I'm assuming, what a clave is: it's this protection of the structure of a feel. So I'm doing the same thing—it's just that my right hand is doing a bass line, or what I would like to think of as a clavinet pattern. You do kind of feel off-balance sometimes, but I've learned how to figure it out.

Also, I'm playing with a modular synthesizer, and that's like playing with the world's greatest percussionist. That's giving me random subdivided 16th notes, so I'm listening to that, and it's taking the place of the hi-hat. Sometimes I play the hi-hat, and sometimes I don't, but the modular theoretically is taking the place of what the hi-hat would be. And that's kind of how our band works. Geoff is covering the atmospherics, and I'm covering the meat and potatoes of the whole thing. And we'll play unison bass lines. Just like all of the great riff bands of the past and present, that is sometimes your biggest sound. Sometimes being unified is more important than trying to sound like four different people. We have to just think about the music, write for what our strengths are, and not forget that it's okay to just play one bass line together and sing on top of it. Many great songs are just that, so sometimes you have to simplify.

MD: So the modular synth is used like a click?

Dion's Setup

Drums: Yamaha Maple Custom
A. custom 5.5x14 snare
B. 8x12 tom
C. 16x16 tom
D. 14x20 bass drum

Cymbals: Meinl
1. 17" hi-hats (two Byzance Dark crashes)
2. 20" Byzance Extra Dry Thin crash
3. 22" Big Apple Dark ride (alternate: 22" Sand crash/ride with three rivets)

Hardware: Yamaha

Sticks: Vic Firth 5A wood-tip

Heads: Evans G1 Coated snare batter, Reso 7 tom batter, UV1 floor tom batter, and Level 360 G1 Coated bass drum batter

Keyboard: Dave Smith Mopho synth mounted on a snare drum stand with one claw sawed off and run through an Electro-Harmonix Memory Toy delay pedal

Josh: Yeah, it's set to a metronome, and I just put it in the monitors. It's foolproof. I start my "1" wherever I want. It's random, though, and it's an analog piece of gear, not a sequencer. It could spit out three notes and then not play a note for three beats. I love it because I'm forced to listen. I'm keeping my pocket within that, and it completes what I'm doing. And then Geoff is free to play his colors and what I like to refer to as the "out" stuff on top of what I'm doing. Harmonically, for the most part, I'm "inside." I'm playing pentatonic scales, I'm ripping the blues and funk, and if I am interacting harmonically, it's in an almost always purely diatonic fashion. And this brings us into the pop-music realm, like alternative pop. For the most part I'm just trying to find interesting bass notes to play underneath him. We're writing songs, and I'm singing them. It's really that simple.

MD: You mentioned being influenced by Pink Floyd, and I can hear that in the moods of the music.

Josh: I really want Paris_Monster to be groove-based music that has an appeal, but that somehow is twisted. Something slightly off. I'm always searching for these tones, little outside stuff to put on top of something that's already accessible.

MD: You also mentioned David Garibaldi.

Josh: Yeah, if you listen to late-'70s or early-'80s funk, the drums are big, gated sounds, and there's maybe one tom that's involved in the groove. That's like my motto for the drumming in Paris_Monster. Sometimes I get really into the ghost notes. I don't displace the snare a lot. The Garibaldi thing is the fact that my right hand is doing so much subdividing because I'm playing bass lines. You're kind of holding down the left side of your body, and your right side is playing different subdivisions against that. I'm not saying it's easy, but I'm keeping it simple, man, I'm keeping it old-school. That's my role in the band. I'm not saying that I'm not going to expand on that, because you never know, but that's where we are right now.

There are moments when I play drums with two hands in the band, and sometimes the modular can play bass. So there will be sections where we'll go completely out, and I just have to listen to the modular, and I'll find my way back. Sometimes I'm completely off tempo, and I love it, and I just want to turn into Paul Motian or Milford Graves or something.

MD: I heard you playing "Hot 'Lanta" on a video with Jim Campilongo, and you were definitely taking it out.

Josh: I love playing with those guys. In a Jim Campilongo concert you will play a song like that, a burner, a swampy, slow, strange song…. You'll play a ballad that absolutely breathes, and you'll need brushes and a riveted cymbal, you'll play absolutely crazy psychedelic free jazz, and then you'll play a two-step, all in the same day. In one gig, my mind will flash Joey Baron, Earl Palmer, Ronnie Tutt, Jay Bellerose, all of these different drummers, and then I'll turn into Al Jackson and lay it down on one song. The Jim Campilongo gig was a huge part of my musical growth over the past five years.

MD: You were using one stick and one mallet in a video with Campilongo.

Josh: It's textures. I'm just trying to find different sounds. One song might need the snare to be tuned up, and the next song might need it flat. The Jim Campilongo gig is really "anything goes," and I feel happy to finally understand what it is to make a commitment in free music. To really just hear something and put yourself out there.

Ultimate freedom is, *I'm saying this right now. I'm making a choice, and I'm listening.* And more often than not, when you find that little space in your brain, then the band starts rolling. The next thing you know you're playing, but there's not necessarily a tempo. But you're playing time and you're moving. I feel like that's what those Ornette Coleman records had, and that's what Paul Motian had with Keith Jarrett. And to me, that was the "next level" shit.

And the thing that's so funny about life and music is that once I learned how to do that, I appreciated the pocket so much more. I realized how important it is—how I have to work on that. And it's kind of funny how it's the same thing with jazz. You don't play jazz for years, you play all kinds of other music, but your musicality continues to grow. The next time you play a standard, you feel so free, like, "Oh, I understand this more now."

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Oh Sees' Paul Quattrone and Dan Rincon

Even greater than the sum of their considerable parts, the drumming duo helps define one of the most prolific and mercurial rock bands of our time.

Scanning the history of the band known as Oh Sees can leave you questioning your definition of "hard work." Known variously as Orinoka Crash Suite, OCS, and Orange County Sound, among other variations, Oh Sees has been the psych-rock outlet of guitarist and singer John Dwyer since 1997. For the past fifteen years the outfit has released at least one album annually, mostly on their own label, and they've toured constantly. Since 2015 they've utilized a double-drummer rhythm section, which currently features Dan Rincon and Paul Quattrone.

While each new Oh Sees album is a wildly unique take on psychedelic music—their latest, *Smote Reverser*, finds the twin drummers unleashing a snare-heavy onslaught on the Santana/Motörhead meld of "Overthrown" and chugging along a hypnotic 7/8 krautrock groove on the twelve-minute "Anthemic Aggressor"—the group's live shows are uniformly incendiary. From behind the drums, a ninety-minute Oh Sees set resembles a long-distance race run at a sprinter's pace.

Oh Sees has featured a total of nine drummers in their lineup. When John Dwyer first contacted Dan Rincon in 2015 about playing with the band, Rincon

Story by Stephen Bidwell
Photos by Nicola Gypsicola

didn't know which of Dwyer's many projects he was being considered for—much less that he was entering a two-drummer situation. "He asked me to learn a couple Oh Sees songs and then come in and jam and see how it worked," Rincon recalls. "[When I arrived] Ryan Moutinho was there, and I was like, *Oh…kay?*" Rincon and Moutinho subsequently played on the two Oh Sees albums released in 2016, *A Weird Exits* and *An Odd Entrances*. Moutinho exited the band soon after and in time was replaced by Paul Quattrone, who'd spent six years in the popular dance-rock band !!! (pronounced Chk Chk Chk). Rincon and Quattrone then recorded 2017's *Orc* and last year's *Smote Reverser*.

Rincon is a Los Angeles native with a lot of punk rock in his résumé. His father, a professional guitarist, introduced him to bands like Blue Cheer and King Crimson, and a drummer uncle gave him his first lessons. After high school, he found himself in the Bay Area playing punk in bands like Wild Thing and Personal and the Pizzas, garage rock with Nobunny, and glammy power pop in the aptly named Glitz.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Paul Quattrone and Dan Rincon are both longtime Ludwig Vistalite players, and live they set up center stage—no risers—with Dan on a clear early-'70s kit and Paul on a circa-'78 Tequila Sunrise set. Each kit features a 9x13 tom, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 14x24 bass drum; Rincon's Black Beauty snare is 5x14 while Quattrone's is a 6.5x14 model.

For the recording of the last two Oh Sees albums, Quattrone and Rincon used house drums. "I used to like using Vistalites on recordings," says Quattrone, "but I get why John didn't want to use them. They had these nice vintage drumkits at Sonic Ranch; I used their Rogers set."

"I used their cymbals as well," adds Rincon. "Live, I play rides for crashes, but it just never transfers as well [in the studio], so I used lighter cymbals."

Quattrone has recently added a Roland SPD-SX multipad unit live to trigger noise, synths, and Theremin samples in concert.

Quattrone hails from Syracuse, New York, and moved to Pittsburgh to attend college, where he played in punk and Afrobeat bands and cofounded the highly regarded garage-rock duo Modey Lemon. After half a decade rocking dance beats with !!!, Quattrone found Oh Sees a welcome home for his broad skillset. "I think that was part of the reason John wanted both of us," says Quattrone. "He knows what we're into as far as drumming goes, and it's the kind of stuff he likes."

Noticing that a Grateful Dead song has come on the house system as we're conducting our interview, Quattrone considers how Oh Sees compares to other well-known rock bands that have featured two drummers. "On songs that we stretch out on during our set," he says, "a lot of times we take it down really quiet, and it goes into some Grateful Dead, Allman Brothers territory. 'Jettisoned' to me is just like a beefed-up Allman Brothers in [terms of] the drums. As much as I love the Grateful Dead, though, I don't listen for the drumming. But the Allman Brothers had these really funky syncopated grooves, and they hit hard."

As with the preceding album, *Orc*, the lineup of Dwyer, Rincon, Quattrone, and bassist Tim Hellman tracked *Smote Reverser* at the famed Sonic Ranch studio located outside of El Paso, Texas, after significant preproduction in Los Angeles. "The only song on *Smote Reverser* that was composed before going into the studio," says Quattrone, "was 'Flies Bump Against the Glass.' And 'Enrique El Cobrador' came out of a spontaneous jam in the studio. But the rest of the songs came out of long jams at our practice space over a period of about two months, four or five days a week. Sometimes Dan and I would get to the practice space a couple hours early and come up with patterns before John and Tim arrived, like those on 'Overthrown,' 'C,' and 'Beat Quest.' For the most part, though, we pretty much made up stuff on the spot."

Quattrone and Rincon both cite Jaki Liebezeit of the German progressive/krautrock band Can as a considerable influence—this is understandable, given Oh Sees' sound. But as Quattrone is quick to tell, the band members draw from jazz and minimalist composers as well. By way of illustration, the drummer describes an incident on tour when Dwyer shared a favorite recording in the van. "He was playing me this Jack DeJohnette track where the intro is just Jack doing his thing," Quattrone recalls. "John was like, 'Is this in a time signature?' It was in 4/4, but DeJohnette was playing around the beat, not playing a pattern. John wanted to do something like that."

In fact, Dwyer plays a bit of drums himself. "John plays like those 'non-drumming' musicians like Prince and Stevie Wonder," says Quattrone, "who always have a really cool feel that I can never match. Sometimes he'll just play something like this," at which point Quattrone taps out a repeated flam that gets wider with each pass, phasing its way back to a regular flam.

So a psych guitarist is incorporating Steve Reich phasing concepts? "Yeah," Rincon affirms. "There would be a second rotation of it. John's a big Steve Reich fan."

And while the Oh Sees bandleader allows a good amount of freedom among his collaborators, when he has something specific in mind, the bar is raised for everyone. "Every once in a while he'll have a specific idea," says Rincon, "and I'll be like, 'I don't know how to do that.' But he'll say something like, 'It's your job. We're practicing on Tuesday—figure it out by then.' And I'll think, *Okay!* It's great; he's pushed me to go in directions I never thought I'd go as a drummer."

In addition to challenging them conceptually, Dwyer has tested Rincon and Quattrone's physical limits. The athleticism required to play a ninety-minute set every night has provided its own form of conditioning, according to Dan, and Paul finds cycling around the hillier parts of L.A. while off the road helpful for increasing his musical endurance. Both players try to stay hydrated and stretch for forty minutes or more before the show. "It's an hour and a half, and it's non-stop," says Quattrone. "I'm forty years old, and even though I'm playing the same music that I played for most of my twenties, when I was in those bands we played for thirty, maybe forty minutes. It's just like playing a sport."

And like every great team, the Oh Sees' drum section succeeds on the strength of their perfectly interlocking parts. While there are songs where unison playing make sense, the developing language of the pair includes increasingly complementary rhythms. "We recently had a practice with just me playing drums," explains Rincon, "and when it came to the most recent tunes, there really was a ton missing without one of us filling in certain parts of the beats."

"When we're not playing the same beat, those are my favorite songs to play," adds Quattrone. "It's really obvious when a song requires us to play the same thing. But on the songs where we really stretch out, we play different stuff every time. It's requires a lot of listening and watching."

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Amanda Shires'
Jerry Pentecost
The Hardest Working Man

Story by Jeff Potter
Photos by Rick Malkin

When *Modern Drummer* reached out to catch up with Jerry Pentecost, the drummer filled us in on his impressive performing schedule and concluded, "I'm really just a dude looking for donuts."

Ah! Perhaps the metaphorical donut? An everyman seeking morsels of wisdom? Wrong. Turns out, he just loves—and frequently refers to—donuts. On tour, he indulges his vice, seeking out local top-rated delicacies.

But far from being Homer Simpson-esque, Jerry is a lanky figure constantly on the go. With his trademark oversized white specs, bundled-back dreads, and coach's whistle dangling around his neck, the thirty-four-year-old, self-taught drummer bursts with positive energy, humor, and a disarming youthful enthusiasm.

Though Jerry may have a sweet-tooth vice, he doesn't drink, which caused snags when he first circulated the bars of his native Nashville to meet musicians. To bolster networking, he turned to Craigslist. "I got on and responded to everything," he says. "It was literally, 'Play this three-hour blues gig for $25.' That was around 2007, and I've been sustaining as a musician *just* playing music for the last four or five years."

The tireless drummer became a Nashville club fixture, known for vaulting onto stages toting his cymbal bag, hitting the gig, and then quickly bounding off stage to barely make the next one—or two. "I do love to do three or four gigs a day," he explains. "I've now played or recorded with just about every Nashville-based up-and-comer. People started taking note, thinking, *What gig does he have at 12:30 on a Tuesday?*"

Locals soon dubbed him "the Hardest Working Man in Nashville." It's paid off. Since 2016, Jerry has served as drummer and bandleader with vocalist/violinist Amanda Shires. *To the Sunset*, Shires' latest disc, is a departure from her usual Americana sound, featuring a heavier rock and pop element shaded by country roots. Jerry's deep-pocketed, multitextured drumming brings grooving drama to the shimmering, gutsy set.

As an acknowledgement of his peers' respect, Jerry was recruited for the past two years to play in the house band for the Americana Music Honors and Awards at the famed Ryman Auditorium, where he performed with a stream of notables, including Van Morrison, k. d. lang, Rosanne Cash, Irma Thomas, Lori McKenna, and the McCrary Sisters. In addition, he was nominated for the Americana Music Association's 2018 Instrumentalist of the Year award, being only the second drummer so honored.

Jerry currently maintains an extensive touring schedule with Shires. He's also been tracking with Ron Pope and will tour with the singer-songwriter as well. When off the road, Jerry still squeezes in gigs at choice local venues and also makes DJ appearances.

And, in case you were wondering, Jerry prefers "old school" regular and glazed. "No designer donuts for me," he insists.

MD: Your first inspiration was R&B. You've said that you initially "didn't get" country music. Yet you eventually found your way into country music and related scenes, fully embracing it.

Jerry: I grew up in a pretty stereotypical low-income black family household. Marvin Gaye and Al Green were played almost exclusively in my house. That's where I discovered my love for R&B and soul music. Eventually I found out that Al Jackson Jr. was drumming on many of those tracks and cowriting some as well. That was pretty heavy for me.

When I got my first drumset at fifteen, I got into 311; Chad Sexton's drum solo on "Applied Science" is one of the reasons I kept playing drums. My first band was modeled after that.

But country was never a thing that was mentioned, though my mom liked Amy Grant on the sly. We'd scroll through the radio, and if something like Reba McEntire came on, I just didn't get it. Because I didn't *know* anything about it: I hadn't tipped my toe into it.

What eventually got me into country was listening to older stuff like Jerry Reed, Buck Owens, and some early George Jones—man, they're playing a million miles per hour, but they're so *calm*, so cool in their Nudie suits. That culture appealed to me. My whole "simple is key" rule is what appealed to me in classic country: "You mean to tell me I don't need to be hittin' all this stuff, and I can literally just serve the music, play a simple beat, and be playing *well* with other musicians? That's it!" It didn't have to be about anything else. Country music was the forum that helped me first understand that it's the *songwriting* you're trying to serve.

MD: How did you first get onboard with country gigs?

Jerry: The first country gig I had, I didn't know it was going to be country when I took it because the guy that addressed me wasn't wearing cowboy boots and a cowboy hat. [laughs] Then he sent me the music, and it wasn't what I thought it would be.

So I was like, *Okay, let me figure this out.* My favorite group of all time is Steely Dan, with their history of the best of the best drummers. The thing about Steely Dan is, it's mostly shuffles. So I thought, "How can I apply Steely Dan to country?" Then I realized

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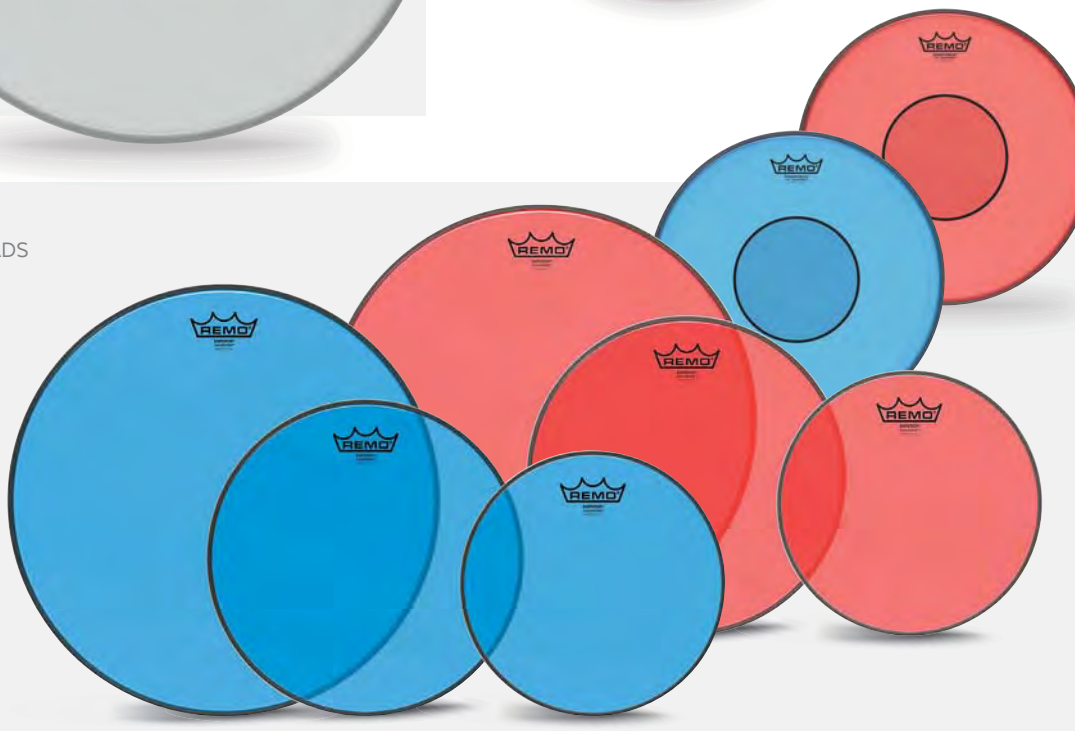

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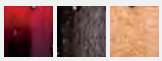

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Jerry Pentecost

that country *is* all shuffles. Then you basically start figuring out, country is on the beat or ahead of the beat, blues is kind of on the beat to behind the beat, R&B is behind the beat…. So you start figuring out where to lay the backbeat, and that's where I came up with it.

MD: Playing with Amanda, you effectively use various combinations of sticks, rods, brushes, etc. Even when rocking big halls, you frequently use a brush for the snare backbeat, getting a fat walloping sound. How do you achieve that?

Jerry: On a lot of gigs I had at the beginning, I had to play with a bandanna over my snare drum because a female singer-songwriter I was working with at the time said to me, "Oh! So you're a basher?" I did *not* want that label to carry with me. So I had to work super hard on listening and getting comfortable with playing lighter.

The problem is, once you start out playing loud, that's your ceiling. If you start low, the band's going to start where your ceiling is. Something I preach with Amanda's band is dynamics. Her voice is soft but very powerful. If you start out loud, you don't have anywhere to go.

My first country gig was with Jonny Corndawg, who now goes by Jonny Fritz. I played with him for about six years, and I used sticks on only a couple songs. It was a weird trio with just him on acoustic guitar, a fiddle, and me. I called it "power brushes" at that point: playing full grooves, full intensity, but with brushes. I developed a good backbeat with the brushes right there. And it's weird—I

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PENTECOST'S SETUP

"It's true that the talent is in your hands," says Jerry Pentecost. "But there are tools along the way. I've been with Promark, and when I discovered the Carl Palmer model sticks, it elevated my playing to a whole new level. I could feel things better; I could rebound better. I was like, *Man! Was it just that I was using the wrong sticks for me all this time?*

"It's the same thing with my Ludwig Black Beauty snare drum," Jerry goes on. "As soon as I started playing, it was, *I'm playing a drum that GETS me.* [laughs] Almost like going out on a date!"

Currently Pentecost plays either a vintage Ludwig Classic Maple set in Bowling Ball Blue Oyster (pictured) or a new Maple Club Date in White Marine Pearl. Each kit includes a 9x13 tom and a 16x16 floor tom; he plays a 14x22 bass drum with the Classic Maple kit and a 14x20 with the Club Date set. His Black Beauty snare is 6.5x14.

Jerry's Zildjian cymbals include 14" hi-hats made up of a K top and an A Custom bottom, and a 22" K Light ride. His Remo heads include an Ambassador Vintage snare batter and an Ambassador snare side, either Emperors or CS Coated tom batters and Ambassador Clear resonants, and a Powerstroke Coated bass drum batter. He uses the aforementioned Promark Carl Palmer model sticks, plus TB5 brushes and Hot Rods. He also uses various hardware brands, a Roc-N-Soc throne, SKB cases, Fender TEN-5 in-ear monitors, and a Roland SPD-S sampling pad with a Roland BT-1 Bar Trigger Pad and a Nektar footswitch.

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don't normally play traditional grip, but I do with brushes; that's what feels comfortable to me.

A lot of brush players don't like any of the brush grip to touch the head; they have palms down, right over the snare drum, and it's all wires. But if I'm going to play a pocket, I want a little bit of the rubber of the grip to hit the snare because, A, it chokes out some of the overtones, and, B, it gives you the closest thing to a solid sound resembling a stick.

Sometimes, playing with a brush in my left hand sounds *better* than playing with a stick on certain grooves, because with a stick you get so many overtones—especially when using in-ears and you can hear everything.

MD: You were featured in one of the Country Music Hall of Fame's Musician Spotlight series of concerts/talks. It's significant that you brought only a minimalist setup and mostly played tunes with guests rather than soloing or lecturing.

Jerry: That's all you need. Right now, I'm only playing a snare, bass drum, hi-hat, and ride. So you have to make the most of it. Sometimes I need to use the butt of the brush or butt of the Hot Rod or whatever I'm using. So you've got to become comfortable with twirling them around or tossing them real quick so you can get a particular sound, then go back to what you were doing.

When they asked me to do that show, my first response was, "Dude, you don't want me to solo, right?" Because that's totally not me. I will do drum solos if I have to, but I try not to because, to me, it's always like an afterthought.

MD: What's the key that's made your phone ring so constantly?

Jerry: The number-one thing above everything is to be a team player. It's not about you; it's not about anything you can or can't do. It's about what the *group* can do—finding your role and serving your purpose. And your number-one purpose should be to play for the song.

MD: Your R&B influences are apparent in your sense of pocket.

Jerry: Al Jackson Jr.'s influence has been super present throughout my playing history. I don't want to say I *modeled* myself after him, because I'm sure that's not the first person people would think of when they hear me play—because he was playing raw soul music and I'm playing Americana, pop, rock, and whatnot. It's just that Steve Cropper called him "the best drummer in the world"—never flashy, just always played what was supposed to be played, every time.

MD: Which country drummers helped you see the light?

Jerry: I could go through a Country 101 of so many greats, but Buddy Harman was special. He's played on *so* many records, including Patsy Cline's, and kind of revolutionized the *sound* of the Nashville country drums.

MD: Your musical trajectory has been unique. You've embraced the common ground between many genres. And the Americana scene has traditionally featured fewer black artists.

Jerry: Yeah, it's predominantly a white-male genre. But I would hope that's not why a lot of attention is on Amanda and me right now. I think we were meant to work together. I enjoy playing her music, and she enjoys me playing her music. We have a great chemistry, and she's been like a sister and best friend to me.

A while ago, a guy reached out to me for a magazine interview, and he was like, "With everything going on in the world, with the police killing black people, as a black artist in a white, male-dominated genre, how do you feel about the attention you're getting?" I said, "I just want one thing to be absolutely clear: this has nothing to do with me feeling like I deserve something because I'm black. I worked hard every single day. Most days, I get up and work until I pass out with one shoe on at four in the morning, and get up and do it all over again. I don't want anybody to think they owe me anything, because I've earned it all. And I can sleep well knowing that."

MD: *To the Sunset* straddles lots of influences, and your playing encompasses that. How do you define your drumming stylistically?

Jerry: I typically say I play everything but jazz. I could hang on a jazz gig. But don't hire me for a jazz gig. For me, the Americana scene is ever-embracing. It's the friendliest community I've ever been a part of. I basically get up on any given day and prepare for whatever gig is on the table, try to play the music as best as I can, and don't think about the category. It's like having a mixed baby; it's a multigenre thing.

Amanda's voice is always going to be geared more towards Americana. Plus she plays fiddle, so that's our connection with roots music. But we say we're a rock band, and that's what Amanda calls it. Personally, I just call it music.

Eights and Sixes

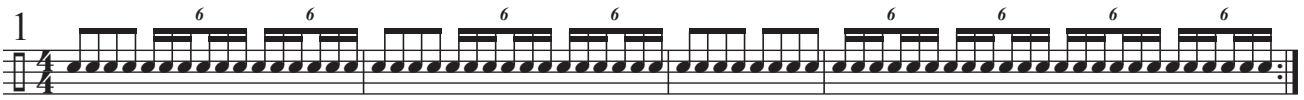
Part 2: Incorporating Double Strokes and Rimshots

by Bill Bachman

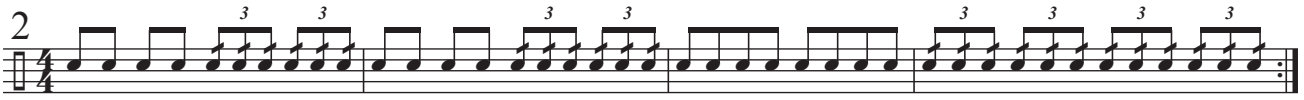
In this lesson we're going to build upon the Eights and Sixes exercise that I introduced in Part 1 of this series by adding double strokes and rimshots into the routine.

Focusing on the 8th-note offbeats within double-stroke sextuplets can do wonders for your timing awareness, because you're emphasizing a checkpoint in the middle of the six-note grouping. Having multiple rhythmic perspectives within sextuplets is beneficial for timing and feel, as you may no longer have to shift your focus from a duple, straight-8th feel to a triplet feel and back. The offbeat awareness will also help with your diddle quality because the emphasis falls on the second beat of the double stroke within each sextuplet.

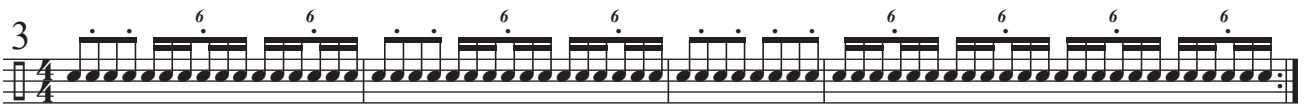
We'll begin with a foundational exercise that's played at one consistent dynamic level. Start slowly, strive to play all the notes as loose, rebounding freestrokes, and don't let the butt ends of the sticks bottom out on your palms. Use an "alley-oop" technique, in which the first stroke is a lighter, higher stroke played mainly from the wrist and the second stroke is a lower, faster stroke played mostly by the fingers. In slower tempo ranges of up to about 80 bpm, play both notes of the diddle as freestrokes that are primarily driven by the wrist. At tempos above 80 bpm, transition to a freestroke and downstroke combination, as the fingers only have time to grab the back of the stick into the palm of the hand on the second note of the diddle. Use a metronome set to an 8th-note subdivision, tap your foot, and count 8th notes out loud.

1

R R R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R R R R R R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R
L L L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L L L L L L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

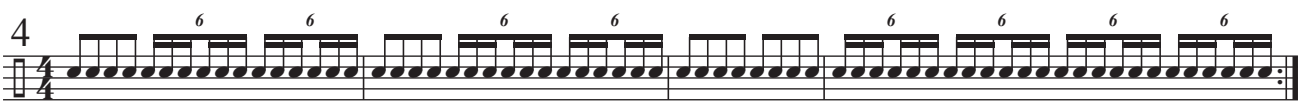
When most people play this exercise, they're generally thinking about the primary 8th-note-triplet strokes underneath the roll, as notated in Exercise 2.

2

R R R R L R L R L R L L L L R L R L R L R R R R R R R R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R
L L L L R L R L R L R R R R L R L R L R L L L L L L L L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

While this is certainly a great way of approaching these figures, our goal in this series is to get a deeper understanding of where the straight 8th note lies within the sextuplet. Let's play the first exercise again and really focus on counting the offbeats out loud. (In the following example, each offbeat is highlighted with a staccato marking.) The 8th-note offbeats occur on the second stroke of each diddle, so make sure they're played with intent and velocity with the help of the fingers—don't just use weak bounces or stiff wrist strokes.

3

R R R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R R R R R R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R
L L L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L L L L L L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

Next we'll invert the rolls so that the fist partial of each six-note grouping occurs on the second double stroke while the 8th-note offbeats occur on the first note of each diddle.

4

R R R R L R R L L R R L L R R L L L L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R R R R R R R R L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L
L L L L R L L R R L L R R L L R R R R R L R R L L R R L L R R L L L L L L L L L L R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R

In order to quicken and strengthen the fingers' ability to add velocity and control to the second beats of the double strokes, we'll revisit the original exercise and add rimshots on the offbeat 8th notes of each sextuplet. The fingers will now have to aggressively snap the stick into the palm on the second beat of the diddle on each sextuplet offbeat as the arm drops down for the rimshot. This motion will add power to the second diddle

strokes. It also helps to practice this on a rimless drum pad where you can slap the shank of the stick against the rubber. All the diddles should be played with full power while utilizing the freestroke/downstroke combination and alley-oop motions.

Start each diddle—whether played with a rimshot or an accent—with a high and light freestroke followed by an aggressive downstroke that freezes pointing down, with the bead of the stick about .5" off the drum or pad. The rimshot will create an accent, but don't treat this variation as a lower tap that precedes a higher stroke. As the tempo picks up, the higher-velocity accented rimshot on the second beat of the diddle will actually be played from a lower height than the freestroke on the first beat of the diddle. The 8th notes setting up the rolls should be played as high and loose freestroke accents, and all the double strokes are accented while the rimshots get a little more power, as notated with marcato markings. In the following examples, rimshots are notated with an "X" notehead.

Now let's once again invert the diddles and play the rimshots on the quarter-note pulses.

Bill Bachman is an international drum clinician, the author of *Stick Technique* and *Rhythm & Chops Builders* (Modern Drummer publications), and the founder of drumworkout.com. For more information, including how to sign up for online lessons, visit billbachman.net.

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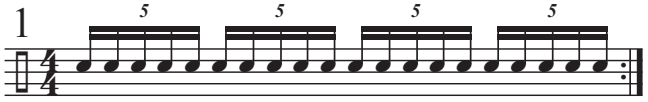
Five-a-Diddles

Exploring Paradiddles in Quintuplet Groupings

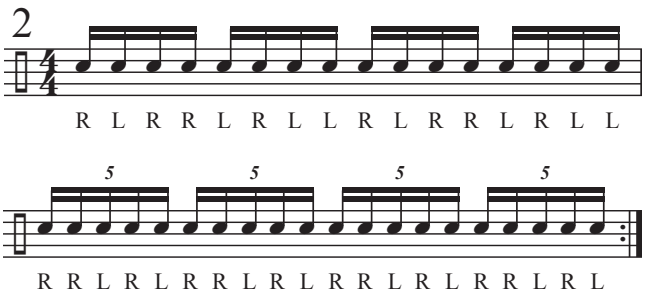
by Jayson Brinkworth

Throughout their careers, great drummers such as Zigaboo Modeliste, David Garibaldi, and Dave Weckl have opened our imaginations to the possibilities of paradiddles and their inversions. Is there anything this rudiment can't do?

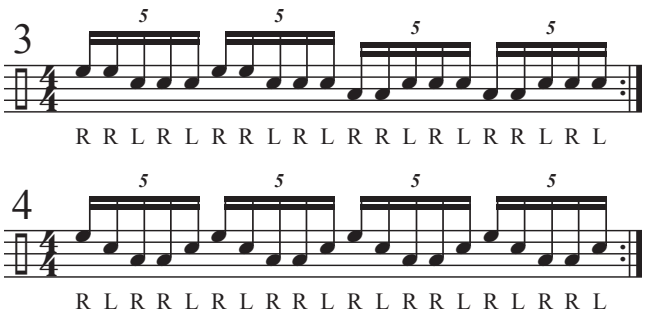
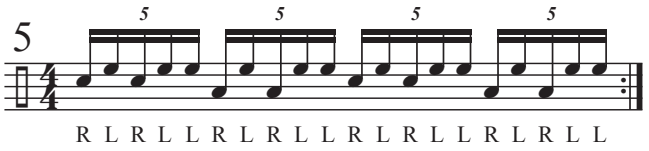
I'd describe myself as somewhat of a paradiddle junkie, and I use paradiddles and their many variations in my teaching. But I've always been particularly attached to what I call the "five-a-diddle" concept. In this variation, we'll play quintuplets inside each quarter-note pulse and apply paradiddle-inspired stickings within those groupings. I find that students can often get turned around a bit when playing single strokes in groupings of five, but they seem to find these sticking patterns more musically accessible.

The following five-a-diddle stickings are written with a right-hand lead, but they can also be reversed and practiced with a left-hand lead. Let's check them out.

1. R R L R L R R L R L R R L R L R R L R L
2. R L L R L R L L R L R L L R L R L L R L
3. R L R R L R L R R L R L R R L R L R R L
4. R L R L L R L R L L R L R L L R L R L L

Once you're comfortable playing these quintuplet stickings, try transitioning between a measure of 16th-note paradiddles and a measure of the various five-note groupings. Here's one variation.

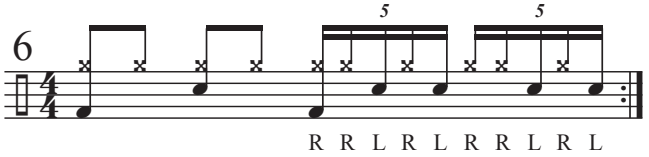


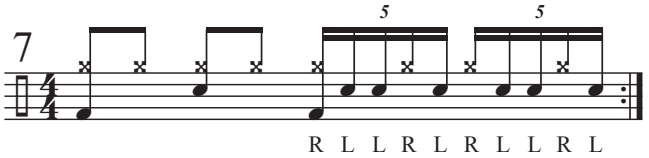
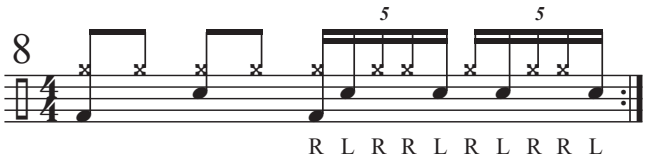
We can also move the five-a-diddle around the drums to create many musical patterns. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

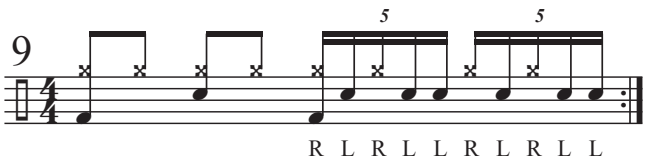


Once you're comfortable with the five-note groupings and are able to move them around the kit, let your imagination run wild, and be as creative as possible with your own combinations.

Next let's incorporate the previous figures into some fun and creative 8th-note grooves.

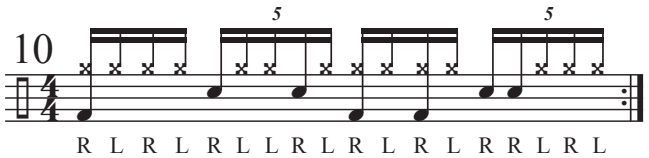
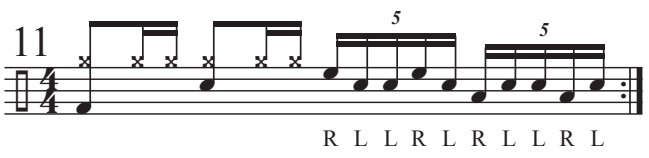


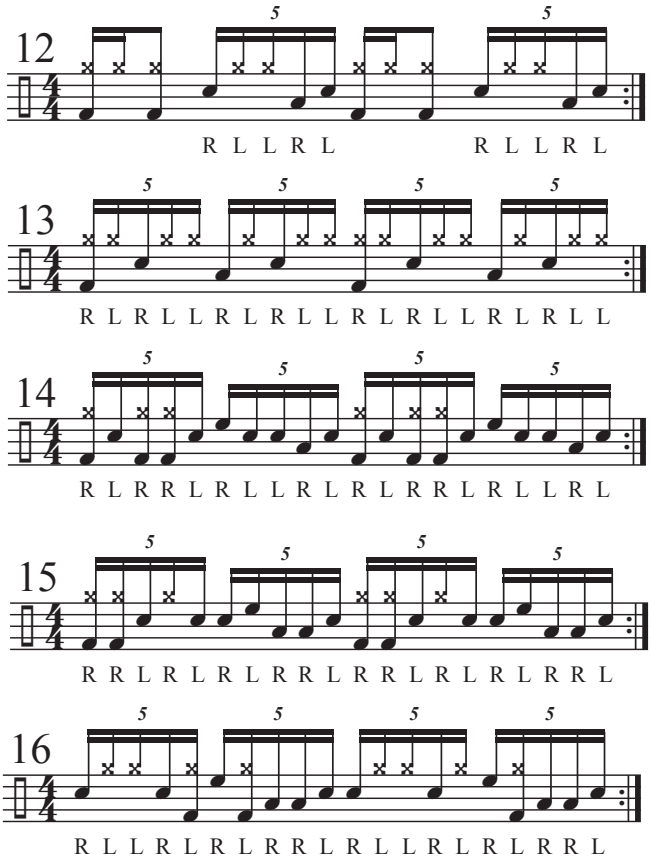


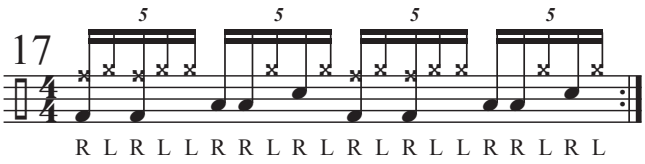


Once the transitions between the 8th-note and quintuplet subdivisions feel smooth, try experimenting with dropping the right hand down to the snare for an accent on beat 4. You can also try playing the bass drum with the right hand within the quintuplet groupings.

Here are a few more examples of grooves that orchestrate five-a-diddles around the kit, along with some variations.




12
R L L R L R L L R L
13
R L R L L R L R L L R L R L L R L R L L
14
R L R R L R L L R L R L R R L R L L R L
15
R R L R L R L R R L R R L R L R L R R L
16
R L L R L R L R R L R L L R L R L R R L



As you can see from the previous examples, the sky's the limit with this concept. Explore, and create your own five-a-diddle ideas. Happy practicing!

Jayson Brinkworth is a freelance drummer, educator, and clinician in Canada.

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Latin Jazz Drumming

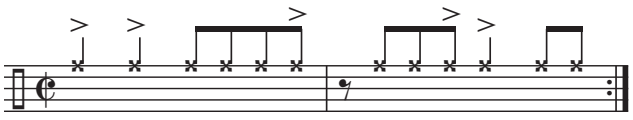
Part 3: Mambo Bell Ideas in 3/2 Time

by Steve Fidyk

Welcome to the third installment in our series on Latin jazz drumming. In this lesson we'll focus on mambo bell variations in a 3/2 time signature.

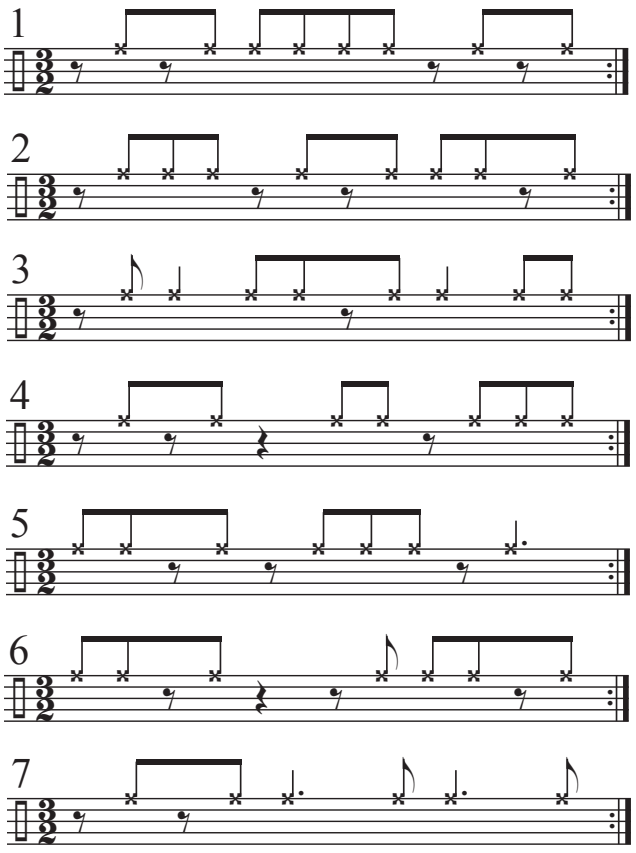
The inspiration for this month's column comes from an audition experience I had several years ago, when I was asked to sight-read a 3/2 samba-inspired chart with a band. On occasion, jazz composers and arrangers will write music that's inspired by Afro-Cuban or Brazilian rhythms set to varying time signatures.

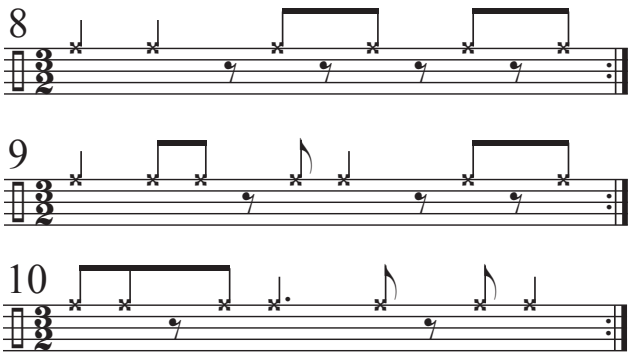
Mambo is a traditional Afro-Cuban pattern that's often built upon a 2:3 clave foundation in 2/2 (cut time). Its main rhythm is typically played on a mambo cowbell, the side of a timbale shell, the cup of a ride cymbal, or closed hi-hats. A common mambo bell rhythm is demonstrated in the following example.



Mix, Match, and Experiment

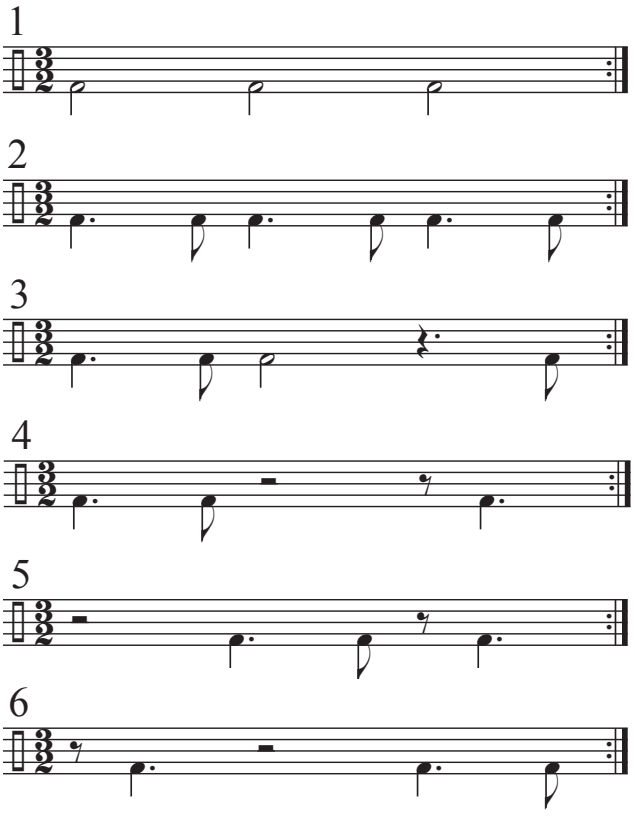
The next examples demonstrate ten 3/2 mambo-inspired bell patterns for practice and application within a band. Practice each pattern with a metronome slowly, and count out loud to ensure rhythmic accuracy.



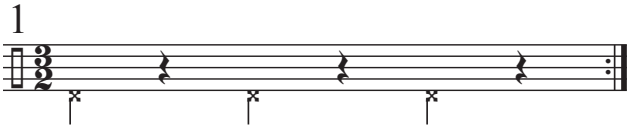


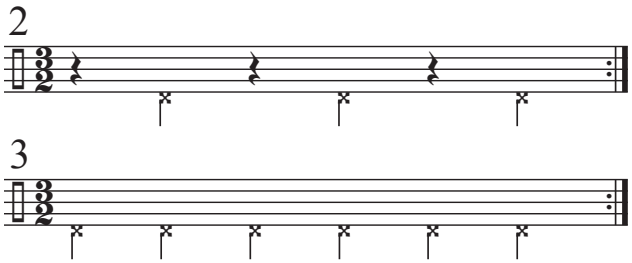
Once you have control of the previous figures, try mixing and matching one of the following bass drum, hi-hat, and rim click/tom accompaniment rhythms with the bell patterns. Layer each rhythm, and be patient with your progress as you refine your coordination and groove.

Here are a few 3/2 mambo bass drum figures.

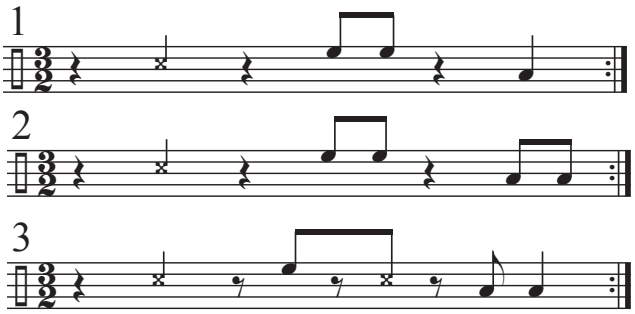


Here are three hi-hat foot variations.



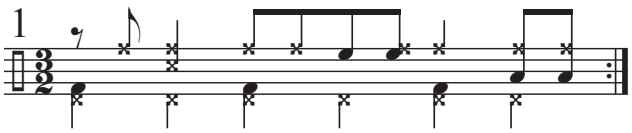


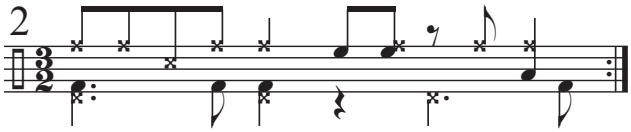
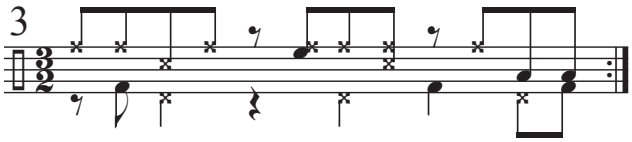
And finally, here are the conga-based rim click and tom accompaniment hand rhythms.



Combinations

The following example combines Mambo Bell Pattern 3 with Conga Hand Pattern 2, Bass Drum Pattern 1, and Hi-Hat Pattern 3.



This example combines Bell Pattern 10 with Conga Hand Pattern 1, Bass Drum Pattern 3, and Hi-Hat Pattern 1.

The next example combines Mambo Bell Pattern 5 with Conga Hand Pattern 3, Bass Drum Pattern 6, and Hi-Hat Pattern 2.

With all four limbs combined, the texture creates a dense and funky feel. Take your time when combining your hands and feet, listen from top to bottom to ensure your limbs are dynamically balanced, and be patient with your progress.

Practice each four-limb combination with a metronome, drum machine, or loop at a wide tempo range. A good starting tempo would be half note equals 64 bpm. Also try writing down your own 3/2 bell patterns, conga accompaniment rhythms, and foot patterns for practice. See you next time!

Steve Fidyk leads the Parlour Project quartet, featuring his original compositions and arrangements. He is a member of the Jazz Orchestra of Philadelphia under the direction of Terell Stafford, and a former member of the Army Blues Big Band of Washington, DC. He is also an artist in residence at Temple University and the University of the Arts.

Music as a Game

Finding Unique Concepts in Unlikely Places

by Aaron Edgar

In his book *Effortless Mastery*, jazz pianist, composer, and author Kenny Werner wrote, "Don't forget: Music is something we just made up. It doesn't actually exist as anything but a game for us." If you haven't checked out *Effortless Mastery*, I highly recommend it. In the meantime, and in the spirit of exploring the "game" of music for exploring's sake, let's work our way through a few misfit rhythmic ideas that combine some of the concepts I've written about previously. But first, a few thoughts.

Recently I was downstairs in my home tapping through a palindromic Fibonacci beat (see last month's Rock Perspectives) with a rogue layer of three that weaves its way through different subdivisions. Upstairs I could hear new flooring being installed and the pop punk band Simple Plan playing in the background. The contrasting sounds of my quiet mathematical tapping, the floor installation, and the radio had me thinking about how most people have difficulty connecting with rhythms that are more complex than simple 4/4 grooves.

Good music evokes emotions in the listener. We all react to certain songs that make us feel happy, sad, nostalgic, and so on. Often those emotions are conveyed by the chords, lyrics, and melodies of the music. Rhythm also tugs at different areas of the emotional spectrum, eliciting in the listener feelings of excitement, lethargy, playfulness, and my personal favorite, tension and release. The further you explore the realms of tension, the more that the results can make people physically uncomfortable. I find this fascinating and take great pleasure in pushing that boundary.

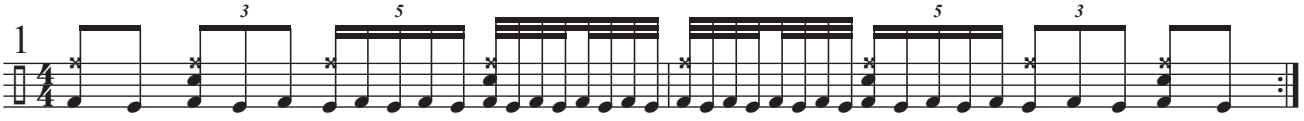
From my perspective, even the most alien-sounding rhythms can eventually feel like interesting syncopations of the underlying pulse. But what's joyous for one can be unbearable to another. This tends to be the case when people experience an initial knee-jerk reaction to the feeling of tension but refuse to explore it further. If you're able to get past the initial reaction, however, there's a world of rhythmic possibility available to explore, even if that exploration is only for the fun of experiencing what rhythms can feel like beyond the edges of your current understanding.

Pushing the Boundaries

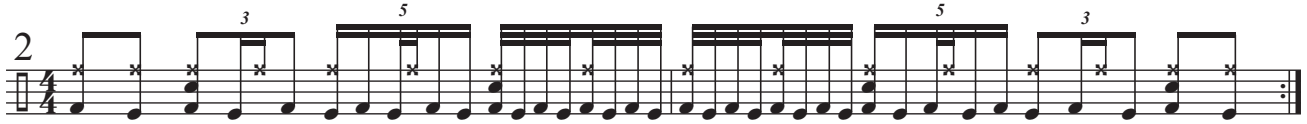
Now let's dig into some musical concepts. Exercises 1–3 build us up to a two-bar palindromic Fibonacci groove in 4/4. Let's take a look again at the first few numerals in a Fibonacci sequence.

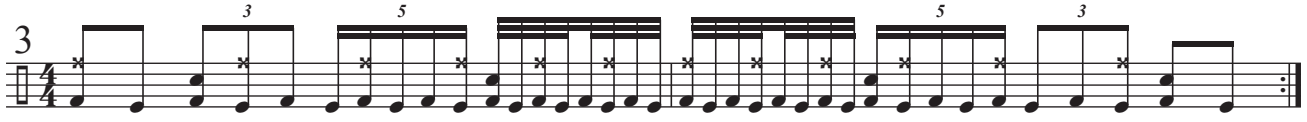
0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, etc.

The double-bass subdivisions ascend the Fibonacci sequence starting at the fourth position: two 8th notes (2), one 8th-note triplet (3), one quintuplet (5), and eight 32nd notes (8) before cycling backward through those groupings. Shed this until you can feel and execute each subdivision comfortably without sliding into each grouping.



The next example adds 8th notes on top instead of quarter notes, creating three-over-two and five-over-two polyrhythms over our triplets and quintuplets, respectively. Go slowly, and make sure both your bass drum subdivisions and 8th-note hi-hat beats feel clean and even.



Next we'll apply another Fibonacci number (3) to our hi-hat rhythm by playing every third note, regardless of the subdivision.

To be clear, these exercises aren't meant for developing speed, and they're not for application within a typical musical setting—although I'd love to hear that! Rather, they're purely for experiencing what subdivision and spacing can do when you're focused on your pulse.

In Exercise 1, each beat will feel like it has its own elasticity within the pulse. In Exercise 2, you should feel time splitting apart in your polyrhythms. And in Exercise 3, you'll experience that three-layer syncopating all around the pulse before lining up only on beat 1 of each bar. Within these types of ideas I often find little rhythmic gems—things I've never heard or felt before. These are the types of concepts that drive me.

Exploring More Math

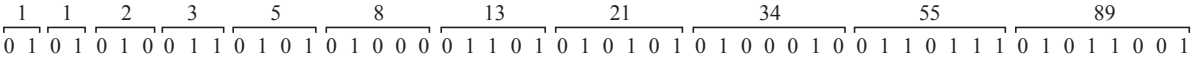
You can apply other mathematical concepts to music with unique results. Let's see what happens if we convert some of the Fibonacci sequence into binary, which is a base-2 numeral system used in computer coding that consists of the numbers 1 and 0.

In our base-10 numeral system (the decimal system), the four-digit number 4,321, for instance, has a 4 in the thousands column, a 3 in the hundreds column, a 2 in the tens column, and a 1 in the ones column. In base-2 (binary), each column's represented numeral is twice the previous column. This is easier to grasp if you read the binary columns from the right to left. Let's take a look at the numeral 89 as a binary number.

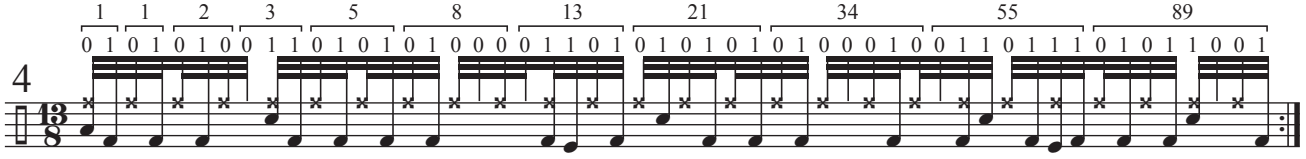
$$89 = 01011001$$

To understand this, try thinking of each 1 as a "yes" and each 0 as "no." Take a look at 89 above, which is an 8-digit binary number. The far-right column represents the number 1. There's a 1 ("yes") in it, so we've got 1. The next two columns represent 2 and 4, respectively. Both of these columns have a 0 ("no") in them, so we're still at 1 total. Following that we have the columns that represent 8 and 16. Each has a 1 in those columns, so we'll add 8 and 16 to get 24, plus 1 from the first column, to get 25. There's a 0 in the 32 column, but a 1 in the 64 column. So by adding 64 to 25, we get 89.

The first handful of Fibonacci numbers translate to binary as demonstrated in the following example.



If we think of each 1 in the binary sequence as a note we'd play ("yes") and each 0 as a note we don't play ("no"), we can interpret this rhythmically. The entire sequence above is 52 binary numbers, which fit evenly as 32nd notes in 13/8. Let's apply this onto the kit with our binary Fibonacci pattern applied to the bass drum and the occasional snare. Playing 16th notes on the hi-hat will hold this pattern together nicely.



I'm not suggesting that everyone attempts to be as strange as possible. But sometimes when people start to take music seriously, they forget that it's okay to explore something simply because it fascinates them. Don't let anyone tell you that you always need an application at hand for a concept you're interested in exploring.

There will always be an overwhelming majority of people who live to play within all the rules of this game we call music. But as an art form, music needs people who want to explore the realms of the unknown—those who don't care what fits within the norms, and who take direction openly from their deepest fascinations. As you dig and explore your own interests, you can legitimately find yourself through music. It's what happened to me, and there's no reason to think it can't happen to you as well.

Aaron Edgar plays with the Canadian prog-metal band Third Ion and is a session drummer, clinician, and author. His latest book, *Progressive Drumming Essentials*, is available through Modern Drummer Publications.

Warm-Ups and Mobility Guidance

Part 4: Isometrics for Posture

by Brandon Green

ONLINE LESSON
moderndrummer.com

Back pain is often associated with playing drums for an extended period of time. This is one of the main reasons I started educating drummers on health and fitness concepts. Sadly, most drummers don't start thinking about protecting their backs until they're already experiencing some level of discomfort.

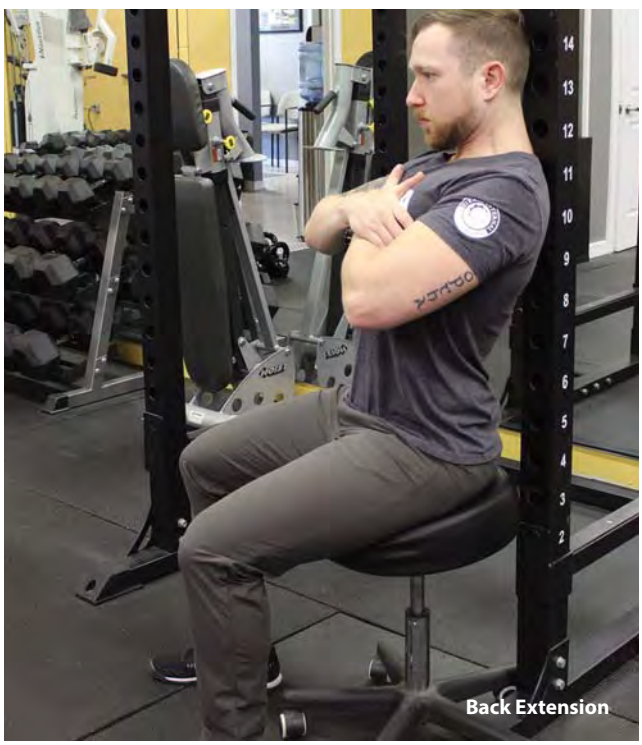
Even if your back is feeling good, try to integrate some of the isometrics discussed in this article to minimize the likeliness of developing back issues down the road. If you already experience back pain while playing, start by performing only the exercises discussed here that you are able to execute without discomfort. Taking a proactive approach to maintaining back health is ideal for being able to play drums for the rest of your life. Oftentimes when drummers have to give up playing, it's because of back pain.

Spinal Flexion Via Hip Flexion

The Internal Components

The spine is a complicated structure, with many unique curves. Before embarking on any of the exercises in this article, make sure you're sitting at an appropriate height. Refer back to my previous series on ergonomics to determine your optimal seat height.

Think about the spine like a garden hose full of water. The cylindrical tension around the entire midsection is what produces spinal stability. The warm-up below will help prepare all of these core muscles throughout their entire range of motion. If you would like to explore more expansive positions, please do so. But if you're currently experiencing pain in your


Back Extension

Trunk Rotation

back, some of these exercises might be too extreme for you to do comfortably. Consult your primary healthcare provider if you have any doubt whether or not you should be trying these exercises.

The basic guideline for executing these exercises is simple. Stay within your active range motion, avoid pain, avoid fatigue, focus your attention on the muscles being used, and contract your muscles tightly when doing the movements.

Isometric Warm-Ups

Repeat the following exercises two or three times, and hold the positions for three to five seconds while contracting targeted muscles.

Seated Hip Hike

Spinal Flexion Via Hip Flexion

While seated, lift one leg to a full bent-knee hip flexion. Focus on contracting the hip flexors and hold. Switch sides and repeat.

Back Extension

While seated a few inches away from a wall, extend your back until it meets the wall. Once you make contact, continue trying to extend your back to create contraction in your lower back.

Trunk Rotation

With your arms extended and your hands together, turn your torso until your hands meet the wall. Continue to apply pressure into the wall to create a contraction. Hold and repeat on the opposite side.

Seated Hip Hike

Lift the top of one side of your hipbone towards your ribcage and hold. Squeeze the oblique/lateral spine muscles. If you feel discomfort, lower to a more comfortable position.

This entire warm-up routine should only take a few minutes. These isometrics are just an introduction to warming up efficiently. The great thing about isometric exercises is that they help increase your awareness of the parts of the body that you use when playing the drums. Make sure to check out the video posted to moderndrummer.com to help better understand these concepts.

Muscle and exercise specialist **Brandon Green** is the founder of Strata Internal Performance Center, and is the owner of the drummer-centric biomechanics and fitness website drum-mechanics.com.

NEW and NOTABLE

Vic Firth
VicKick Bass Drum Beater

This beater, developed in collaboration with jazz great Peter Erskine, is designed for drumset and cajon players. A large maple shaft and smaller 1.75" felt ball create an even distribution of weight from top to bottom, resulting in smoother action and more control throughout the dynamic range. A standard-size rod and tapered wood shaft ensure that the beater fits universally into most pedals.

vicfirth.com

Tama
Quick-Set Cymbal Mates

Quick-Set Cymbal Mates incorporate slight inward pressure to hold cymbals in place and will work with multiple brands of hardware. Limited-edition packs of four are offered in blue, red, black, and white.

tama.com

Mapex
Armory Series Drums

The Armory series, which features 6-ply, 7.2 mm birch and maple hybrid shells, now includes Emerald Burst and Redwood Burst finishes.

mapexdrums.com

On-Stage
MDT2 Drum Throne

The MDT2 features an internal nylon sleeve around its height-adjustable shaft and a spider-shaped insert at its base. Additional features include solid-steel, double-braced legs and non-slip rubber feet. The height of the throne can be adjusted from 19.5" to 24.4" with five locking-pin locations. The base spread is 18.11" inches, while the foam-filled cushion is 2.5" thick.
on-stage.com

CruzTools
GrooveTech Drum Multi-Tool

This device provides fourteen tools in a compact fold-up unit. Included are four standard and five metric hex wrenches, slotted- and Phillips-head screwdrivers, a ruler, and a drum key. All components are made from heat-treated S2 alloy and are manufactured to precise tolerances. The patent-pending single-piece body allows for easy rotation. List price is $18.95.
cruztools.com

Los Cabos Drumsticks
7/16" Timbale Sticks

At 16" long and .4375" around, these new timbale sticks are designed for quick response, excellent grip, and a bright sound.
loscabosdrumsticks.com

Vater
Extended Play Drumsticks

These sticks feature a pearl-colored, specially formulated finish that protects the tip and shoulder area of the stick from chipping and cracking. The 3" Stick Shield located in the rimshot area is said to be highly impact resistant and eight times stronger than steel. Sizes available are 5A, 5B, Power 5A, Power 5B, and 3A, with wood or nylon tips, as well as MV7 and MV8 marching models.
vater.com

Tama
Starphonic Copper Snare

This 7x14, 1.2 mm copper-shell snare is said to provide a thick and complex tone. Additional features include grooved hoops, Freedom lugs, a linear-drive strainer, a detachable butt plate, and a satin-brushed finish. List price is $999.98.
tama.com

Latin Percussion
Tambourines

LP Pro 10" tambourines have Asian oak shells and a choice of a single or double row of aluminium, bronze, or brass jingles. Headed and non-headed versions with alternating brass and bronze jingles are also available. All models include a carrying bag. Prices range from $153.99 to $230.99.

The 10" Worship tambourine features a lightweight wood shell and sixteen pairs of steel jingles for an open, bright sound. It comes with a synthetic head and a reinforced grip for increased comfort. List price is $61.99.
lpmusic.com

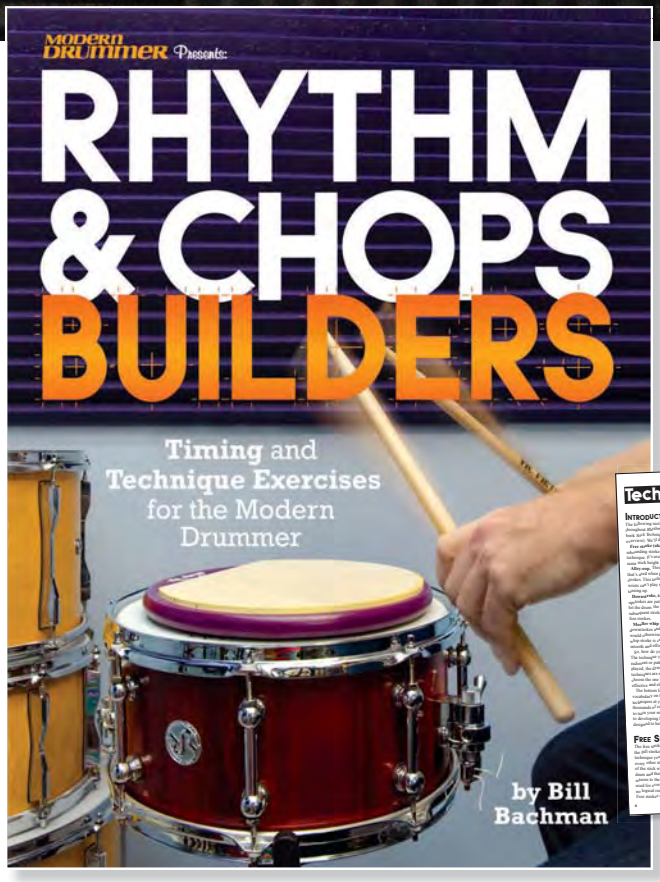
Blue Microphones
Ember XLR Condenser

Featuring a proprietary, hand-tuned condenser capsule, the Ember microphone aims to deliver a clear, open, and detailed performance for recording or streaming. A tight cardioid pickup pattern focuses on the source and minimizes room noise for a clean, up-front sound. The Ember comes with a mount for any standard microphone stand and is compatible with Blue's S3 Shock suspension mount and Compass boom arm. List price is $99.
bluedesigns.com

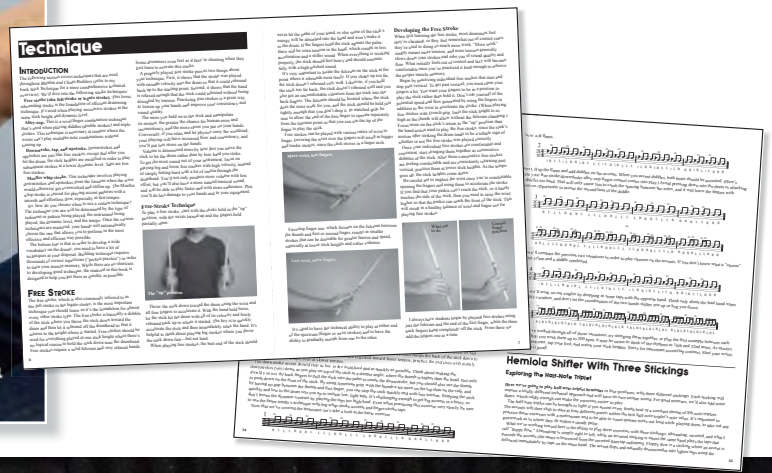
Promark
Shira Kashi Oak Drumsticks

The Shira Kashi Oak series now includes six Select Balance 5A, 5B, and 7A models. Forward models feature a short, 2.25" taper, which shifts the center of balance toward the front for improved power and speed. Rebound models feature a longer, 3" taper for more finesse and agility.
promark.com

BUILD your Chops!



Rhythm and Chops Builders, by renowned technique master Bill Bachman, contains a ton of practical and efficient exercises for developing and expanding your rhythmic vocabulary and accuracy, and for increasing your overall comfort level with the sticks. This book is best used in conjunction with Bachman's *Stick Technique*, which focuses on the physical motions required for building loose, flowing, powerful, and fast hands.



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NEW and NOTABLE

Gretsch
USA Custom Exotic Red Gum Drumkit

Available in two configurations, the limited-edition Exotic Red Gum drumkit features 6-ply maple/gum shells, 30-degree bearing edges, die-cast hoops, a double-tom holder, and a Satin Millennium Burst nitrocellulose lacquer finish. The setup featuring a 5x14 snare, an 8x12 rack tom, a 14x14 floor tom, and a 14x18 bass drum lists for $3,799. The second configuration, with a 5.5x14 snare, 7x10 and 8x12 rack toms, a 14x16 floor tom, and an 18x22 bass drum, lists for $4,799.
gretschdrums.com

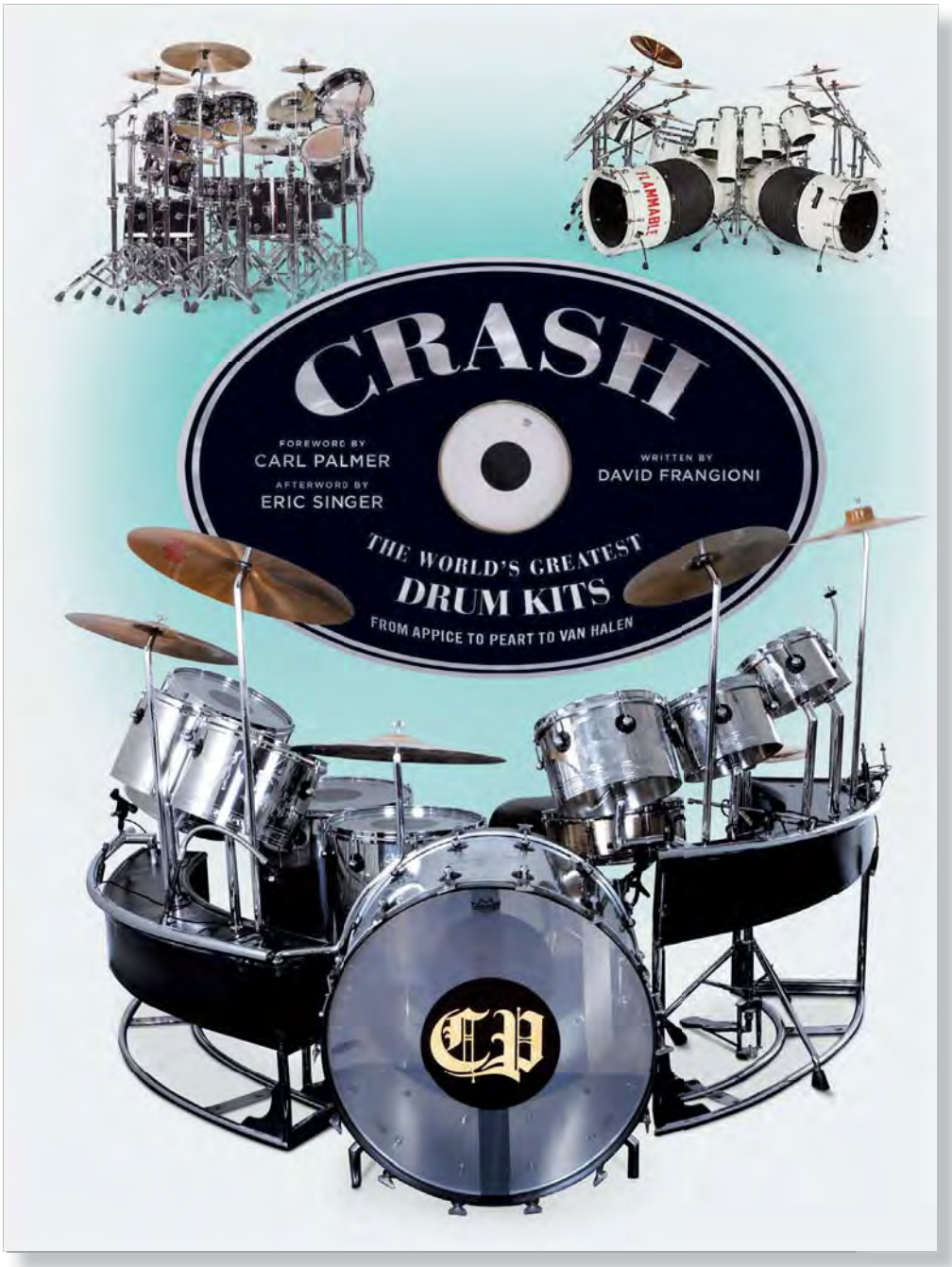
Dynamic Beaters
FlexBeater

This flexible bass drum beater is designed to offer a smooth feel and enhanced rebound. The felt top produces a powerful, full-bodied sound. FlexBeaters are available in two models: 64-gram lightweight and 83-gram medium-weight.
dynamicbeaters.com

Evans
SoundOff Drumhead

This single-ply, black mesh drumhead is ideal for low-volume practice or for use with electronic triggers. It's available in 8" to 24" sizes and lists between $27.25 and $81.50.
evansdrumheads.com

"**Amazing** Rock Drum Set history in one book now for the world to see. Sit back and enjoy!"- Carl Palmer



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CRITIQUE

RECORDINGS Taking the Reins

Phil Stewart *Melodious Drum*

A drummer and percussionist shines on his professional recording debut.

Whereas much modern jazz opts to explore dissonant or chaotic sonic spaces, Phil Stewart's first album, *Melodious Drum,* is a swinging expression of melancholy-tinged joy. Stewart's drumming anchors these ten tunes with inventive takes on traditional jazz patterns, paying homage to players like Max Roach and Philly Joe Jones without scanning as stale or appropriative. Stewart's ride and snare interplay is foundational rather than flashy, and the band crafts memorable, hook-laden tunes perfectly suited for dancing. The great joy of *Melodious Drum* is that Stewart and his collaborators possess whatever indefinable qualities of musicianship cause jazz to crawl into your consciousness and demand that you listen over and over. (Cellar Live) **Keaton Lamle**

Henry Conerway *With Pride for Dignity*

The drummer gives his trio the platform to develop a group sound, interpreting their music with freshness and appeal.

Groove and pocket are something drummers discuss often. It's something where you know it when you hear it. One drummer who's really got it is Henry Conerway, who displays a deep pocket and masterful groove on his debut album. Within a traditional piano-trio format, Conerway, pianist Kenny Banks, and bassist Kevin Smith explore a mix of classic jazz standards and originals. With a group sound like a 21st-century update of Ramsey Lewis or the Three Sounds, pocket is paramount, with rolling, hip bass lines and tasteful piano on top. Check out the opener, "Slippery," for a sampling of all of these qualities, or the spry brush work on "Cottontail." Conerway's playing throughout is supportive and snappy, swinging and adding just the right amount of kick. This approach continues into the solo drumming of "Carvin's Agreement," named for Conerway's teacher, the legendary Michael Carvin. (thehc3.com) **Martin Patmos**

Jeff Berlin *Random Misfires*

The veteran Boston-area drummer turns personal challenges into art.

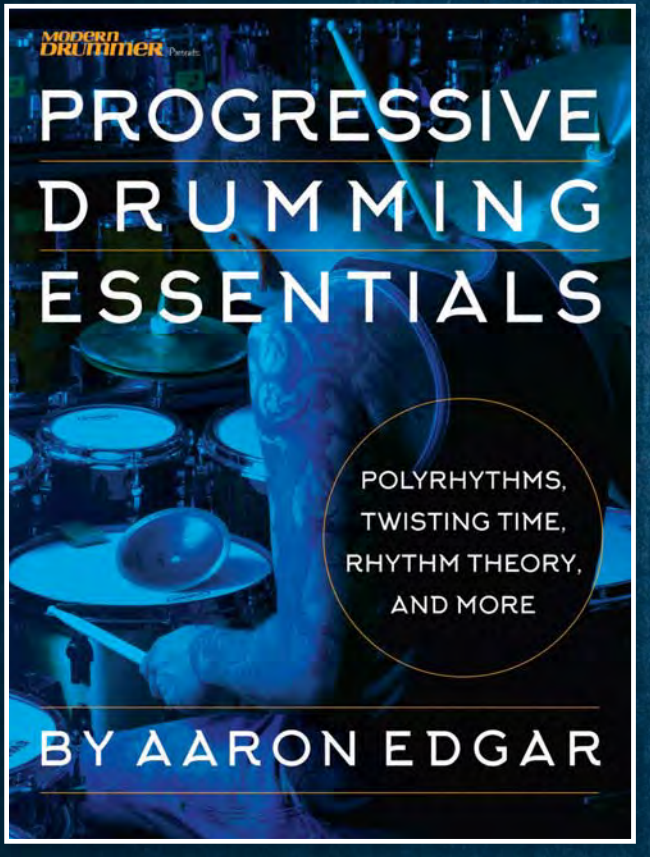
After suffering a series of strokes in 2015, the Vermont-based Bow Thayer drummer was forced to modify his professional and personal habits. In some instances, the bite-sized drum-driven compositions on *Random Misfires* evolved directly from therapeutic exercises Berlin performed to regain his motor skills, which in turn helped him develop various innovative sticking patterns applied in these pieces. With the assistance of musical friends, woodwind player Dana Colley (Morphine) and guitarist Pete Weiss, a rehabilitated Berlin stokes twenty-one genre-defying, visually evocative drumscapes, such as the lovably lumbering "Baby Elephants," bewildering "Pagan Mantis" in 7/8, and rhythmically mangled "Winged Man," highlighting the endearing vulnerability of their creator. "Random misfires"? Here's proof that a record's title doesn't always tell the whole story. (jeffberlin.bandcamp.com) **Will Romano**

Rudy Royston *Flatbed Buggy*

A Royston solo effort surprises again.

As a sideman to numerous jazz stars, Rudy Royston has shown an eager open-mindedness for genre mixing. And this, his third solo disc, is a striking affirmation. In a sharp left turn from the drummer's previous in-your-face trio disc, *Rise of Orion*, his latest is a melodic outing bathed in a warm, earthy timbre generated by the uncommon format of drums, cello, accordion, bass, bass clarinet, and occasional sax. The compositions are inspired by Royston's memories of youth in rural Texas, expressed in a jazz/chamber framework shaded by early American folk. There are also R&B, funk, and rock influences, largely suggested by his grooving yet open and never heavy-handed guidance. And on the most jazz-defined track, the oddball jigsaw bopper "Bobblehead," Royston lets loose with urgent swinging topped by a spectacular solo. In contrast, his solo spotlight on "The Roadside Flowers" serves as an eloquent compositional transition. Intimate and yearningly restless. (Greenleaf Music) **Jeff Potter**

Play More PROG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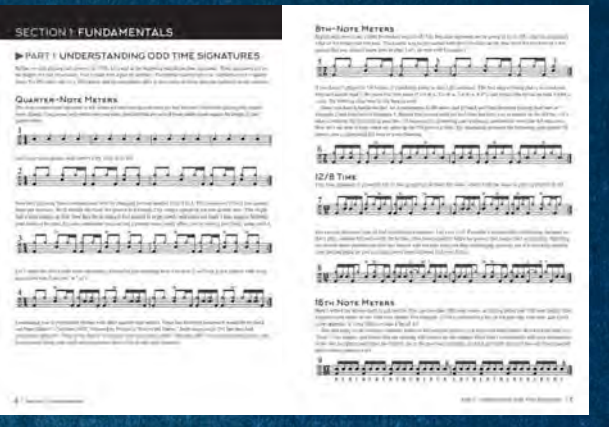
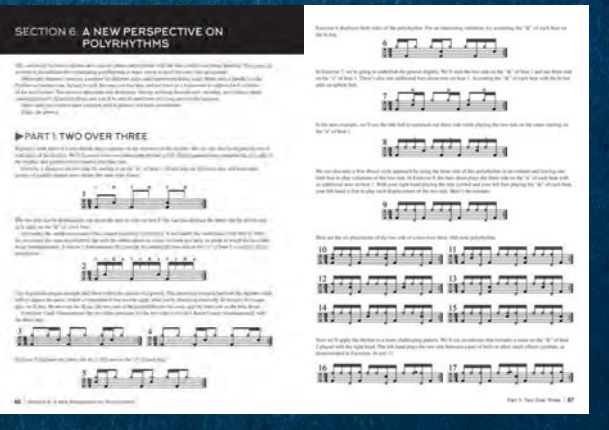


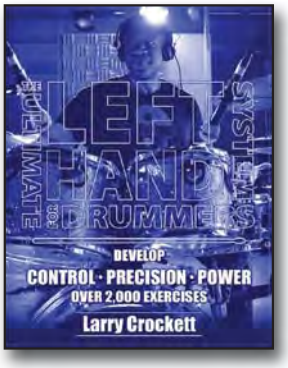


Progressive Drumming Essentials is an expanded collection of articles originally written for *Modern Drummer* magazine. The book progresses from the fundamentals of odd time signatures all the way up to super-advanced concepts like implied metric modulation and displaced polyrhythms. For the most adventurous modern drummers out there, this is a must-have!

Order your copy now at **www.moderndrummer.com**

The Ultimate Left-Hand System for Drummers by Larry Crockett

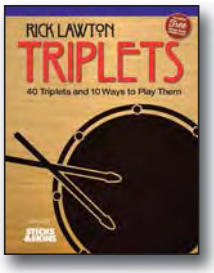
This book offers a sobering look at your weak hand, and a plan to get results.

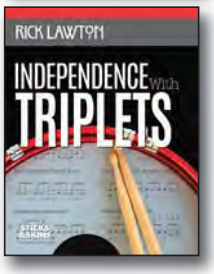


Larry Crockett's new book is a whopping 271 pages of exercises for just your left hand, and it sheds light on the challenges most of us face when confronting the reality of the disparity between our limbs. There's only one line of music here, with only the suggestion to play quarter notes with your bass drum in each measure, and there don't seem to be any chapters distinguishing theme or concept. So what you're left with is material that will strengthen your left hand with everything from simple, rudimentary ideas to involved four- and eight-bar solos that could take a while to execute properly. Like Jim Chapin's classic *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer*, which presented a comprehensive technical and musical left-hand snare schooling underneath a basic jazz ride pattern, *The Ultimate Left-Hand System* is something to check in with piecemeal, and it is open-ended enough to where you can move the information to your right leg or whatever else needs attention. (ultimatelefthand.com, lulu.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

40 Triplets and 10 Ways to Play Them and *Independence with Triplets* by Rick Lawton

Cracking the code of triplets with an eye on detailed phrasing options.





Exactly how deep does one need to get into triplets? If you're a swinger wondering what legends like Elvin Jones and Tony Williams were doing, and how, the answer is "very deep." Author Rick Lawton takes a stab at different permutations in the world of triplets, focusing on the common and alternate stickings and accents that make up the foundation of jazz and other genres. The first volume highlights "the Main 40" triplets and contains examples focusing on snare drum and bass drum, and then mixes in other elements including shuffles and toms. You could realistically spend weeks or months on just one of the pages here, incorporating these ideas into your grooves or solos, and still have plenty to learn and work on as you advance. The follow-up volume, *Independence with Triplets*, returns to those 40, supplementing the initial patterns with crash cymbals, jazz ride, hi-hat, and notated staff examples like "Add Unaccented Snare Drum"; things get rather complicated rather quickly. This is useful stuff, cleanly presented in bite-sized nuggets, and sure to bring your musicality to the next level. (sticks-and-skins.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

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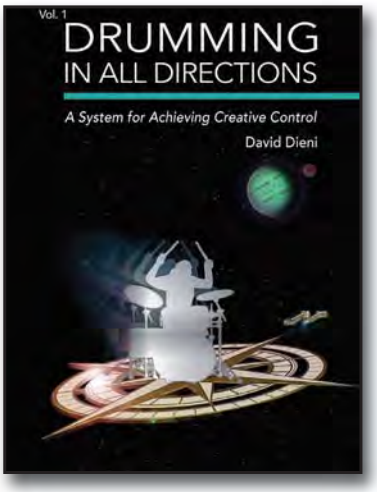
Drumming in All Directions by David Dieni

An extensive take on developing four-limb coordination from the ground up.



The San Francisco–based drummer and educator David Dieni's first published effort, *Drumming in All Directions, Vol. 1*, seeks to provide a fresh perspective on independence and coordination. In the book's introduction, Dieni explains the concept of what he calls "motion-balance" to develop coordination and freedom. Rather than using a "hands-first, feet-second" approach to internalizing coordination, Dieni attempts to tackle four-limb interdependence development head-on by incorporating both the hands and feet right from the start.

To accomplish this, *Drumming in All Directions* develops fifty different alternating limb combinations, as demonstrated in two-limb, three-limb, and four-limb matrices. For instance, a few possible combinations could be from the right hand to the left hand (as found in the book's "2-Limb Matrix" section), or from the left hand to a combination of the right hand and both feet (as found in the "4-Limb Matrix"). These combinations are to be played over Dieni's "Control Workouts," which comprise the bulk of the book. These are two-bar exercises written on one line, with two-voice alternating notation split between the top and bottom spaces. Students are directed to read through the workouts while applying one of Dieni's matrix patterns to the exercises.

There are also ostinatos for the three- and two-limb combinations. If you're practicing a Control Workout with a combination of the right hand, left foot, and right foot from the three-limb matrix, you can apply one of the seven ostinatos with your left hand while reading through the exercise, for instance. "Groove Melodies" are included to break up the workouts and provide examples of creative applications for the material, and there's a guide to how the patterns should be voiced on the kit.

While Dieni's system can seem overwhelming or confusing at first, his concept should be diligently understood before diving into the rest of the book. Once you're comfortable with his methodology, the book offers no shortage of ways to practice it, with over seventy pages' worth of Control Workouts and Groove Melodies. If you're willing to dig in and really internalize Dieni's concepts, you should be set with independence material for a very long time. (DID Productions, $19.99) **Willie Rose**

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Big Brother and the Holding Company's "Piece of My Heart"

San Francisco circa 1967/68 was home to some of the most successful and forward-thinking rock bands of the time, including the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Santana, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and Big Brother and the Holding Company, featuring singer Janis Joplin. Joplin was a larger-than-life presence who approached the stage like a gladiator fighting against the demons that tormented her. Very few performers have commanded as high a level of critical acclaim and audience admiration as Janis, who held nothing back onstage. According to Big Brother drummer Dave Getz, the band members never worried about their live shows because, from his perspective, "Having Janis Joplin in your band was like having an atomic bomb in battle. Meaning, when you have a lead singer who continually performs at 90 percent of her capacity, it gives the band confidence to play at the highest level they're capable of. At the same time, Janis was very sensitive; her swagger was a façade. She did have a little-girl side to her."

Don Hunstein Sony Music Archives

To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the group's seminal second LP, *Cheap Thrills*, Columbia/Legacy has applied its originally proposed title, *Sex, Dope & Cheap Thrills*, to an alternate version of the set consisting of copious unreleased performances. The original album featured the track "Piece of My Heart," which broke the singer and her (soon-to-be former) band nationally. "It was 1968, the year following the Summer of Love," recalls Getz. "The *Cheap Thrills* sessions took place in April, May, and June of that year. The project initially began as a live album recorded in Detroit, but we weren't satisfied [with the results], so we would go between CBS Studios in New York City and CBS in Los Angeles.

"'Piece of My Heart' was written by Brill Building tunesmiths Bert Berns and Jerry Ragovoy," Getz continues, "though we actually acquired the song from Jack Cassidy, the bassist for Jefferson Airplane. He wanted to come down to the studio and play something he thought would be perfect for us. Jack played the Erma Franklin version, which was soulful but restrained. Janis and [guitarist] Sam Andrew 'Big Brotherized' it, as Janis identified with the song enough to make it her own." The other members of Big Brother who appear on the recording are guitarist James Gurley and bassist Peter Albin.

Getz is forthright when asked about the contributions of engineer Fred Catero and producer John Simon to *Cheap Thrills*. "Fred was a great engineer," says Getz, "and he doesn't get the credit he deserves for his work. We recorded the album entirely live [to 16-track], with only vocal overdubs. Our connection to John Simon was purely through our manager, Albert Grossman. Albert was grooming John at the time. [Simon was also working with the Band around that time.] I have great respect for John, but as a band we felt pressure from him that he didn't understand where we were coming from. We thought as musicians that he had a lot of disdain for our music, and he was doing it strictly as an 'assignment' for Albert. That being said, he did a great job."

Getz literally comes crashing out of the gate on "Piece of My Heart," slamming his bass drum and crash cymbal on the downbeat of the song's famous intro, then building tension with dynamic buildups on the ride, snare, and floor tom before Joplin's classic "Come on!" vocal entrance. In the first verse Getz settles into a nice soul groove, with 2 and 4 on snare and alternating singles and doubles in his kick. Setting up the chorus, he accentuates with 8ths on his kick, though concert clips from '69 show that he began using a double-kick setup and switched to 16ths to support. Later Getz caps the sixteen-bar guitar solo (2:29) with a sweet and subtle triplet-based snare/bass drum fill that nudges the energy in the right direction without over- or under-selling it. This can be said about Getz's entire performance on "Piece of My Heart." A prime example of Joplin's highly emotional vocal style, the song benefits greatly from the drummer's understanding of his place within the band's unique kinetic balance.

Since 1987, Getz has performed in the U.S. and Europe with a reconstituted Big Brother and the Holding Company, which also features original bassist Peter Albin.

Bob Girouard

What's on That Song?
Dave Getz utilized a Rogers five-piece set and Zildjian cymbals on the *Cheap Thrills* sessions. Today he endorses Kumu drums.

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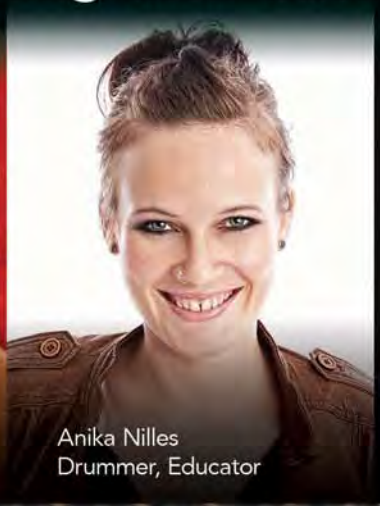

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Ty Segall and GØGGS' Charles Moothart

"There are endless crazy things that happen out there," Charles Moothart muses while attempting to recall a tour tale suitable for sharing with the general public. "I think the better story is how all these events build up to those rare, like, almost psychedelic moments you have where you're like, 'How did we end up here after all this ridiculousness?'"

A multi-instrumentalist from Los Angeles, Moothart has spent the last decade crisscrossing the globe with his impossibly prolific pal Ty Segall, supporting a slew of projects ranging from lo-fi garage rock to glam to psych pop and hardcore punk. He's played guitar with the Ty Segall band and also with the acid-rock trio Fuzz (featuring Segall on drums). More recently, he's assumed the drum throne in Segall's current backing group, the Freedom Band, as well as with Ty Segall and White Fence, and also with GØGGS—a take-no-prisoners punk-rock supergroup comprised of Moothart on drums, Segall on guitar, Michael Anderson on bass, and Ex-Cult's Chris Shaw on vocals.

"Ty and Chris had this idea to make a band that sounded like a Killed by Death comp," Moothart says, referencing the cult series of underground bootleg compilations of rare '70s and '80s punk songs. "Crazy punk bands, twisted-ass rock 'n' roll songs—that's the blueprint for GØGGS." Anchored by Moothart's propulsive drumming and Anderson's gnarly, fuzzy bass, GØGGS' sophomore LP, *Pre Strike Sweep*, is an uncompromising aural assault. Segall's creative guitar work, perhaps more full-frontal than ever before, does its best to bend the listener's brain, while Shaw's intense, reverb-soaked howl takes the overall vibe of menace and paranoia to the next level.

"The first time I met Chris, I was

Marcos Manrique

intimidated," Moothart admits. "We were on tour in New Orleans, walking down the street in the French Quarter, and here's this bad-ass guy, obviously a total rocker, sitting outside drinking a beer. Ty knew him from playing with his band (then called Sex Cult), and I'd heard they were super sick. From then on, every time we'd roll through Memphis (Shaw's hometown), or Ex-Cult would play in California, we all seemed to instinctively push the envelope—both with playing and partying. Some of those moments might be more suitable for this kind of story because that was definitely a crazy time period!

"Flash forward to December 2017 and both GØGGS and the Freedom Band are playing this amazing psych-rock festival in Mexico City," says Moothart. "The whole experience was surreal. As we were driving in, a kid handed Ty a Mexican flag with an eyeball painted on it. The shows were just magical. Later on, Chris and I were hanging out at the Pyramid of the Sun, drinking margaritas and eating tortillas filled with grasshoppers and guacamole, and I just had one of those crystalizing moments, like 'How the hell is this happening right now?'

"I was surrounded by my oldest friends—Ty, Michael, Mikal Cronin—people I went to high school with—people I learned how to play music with," Moothart continues. "I'd only known Chris for a couple years, but we'd become so tight. And I'm taking a picture of him looking all tough on top of the Pyramid of the Sun, and I'm having these flashes of everything we've gone through collectively. Not only the fun times, but also all the fights, all the van breakdowns, all the disastrous moments that can break people. That's the life of a touring musician. Every day is a new adventure, and it never gets easier—in a good way. I wouldn't change it for anything. Music and traveling are all I've ever wanted to pursue in life, so being able to combine those two things is a dream come true. That moment in Mexico City—it kind of sums up why we do what we do."

While drums aren't his primary instrument, Moothart says it's become his favorite when working with others. (He's currently working on a self-contained solo record to get his guitar and songwriting fix.) He's also come to respect the increased demands of drumming. "I've had to re-evaluate my daily schedule. I need to drink more water. I need to watch alcohol intake before playing. The GØGGS set is forty-five minutes of non-stop mayhem; I don't want to be the weak link because I cramped up two songs ago."

This high level of physicality—coupled with the fact that everyone involved in GØGGS has other projects to tend to—makes touring rare, though the group plans to hit select East Coast and European cities in Spring 2019. "We consciously avoid the confines of tour cycles," says Moothart. "We play shows when and where it feels right. That way it feels fresh every time we do it. We always want GØGGS' shows to feel like a special experience—both for us and for the audience."

David Jarnstrom

Road Gear

Even amidst the chaos of GØGGS' pile-driver din, Moothart injects a subtle swing into his style—paying homage to idols like Mitch Mitchell, Keith Moon, John Bonham, and Bill Ward. Thus, it stands to reason that his gear of choice is similarly vintage. "I have an early '50s Ludwig kit with an off-white, pearl wrap," he says. "It's a 26" kick with 13" and 16" toms, and I play a newer 5x14 Ludwig Supraphonic snare." And for cymbals? "I've had some amazing vintage cymbals in the past," Moothart laments. "Such beautiful instruments, but I made the mistake of taking them on tour, and I broke them all. Now it's new Zildjian As all around, always with the Guitar Center warranty. I've got a 23" Sweet ride, 14" New Beat hi-hats, and 20" A crash."

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The Hollywood Custom and Vintage Drum Show

Classic and Modern Drumming Dazzles at the Latest Edition of the Perennial Festival

Since its inception nearly two decades ago, the Hollywood Custom and Vintage Drum Show has built up a reputation as a national premier drumming event. This past October 13, drum enthusiasts flocked to the Glendale Civic Auditorium in Glendale, California, for the eighteenth edition of the annual show. Kerry Crutchfield, the event's producer, sponsor, and emcee, organized a day of informative clinics and performances, gorgeous vintage and modern gear, and bonding among fellow drummers. The day's exceptional clinicians and performing artists included Jimmy Ford (Lionel Hampton) and Randy Caputo (Randy Caputo as Gene Krupa show), the Jeff Hamilton Trio, Stephen Perkins (Jane's Addiction, Hellflower, Porno for Pyros), and the Dave Weckl Trio.

Ford and Caputo opened the performances with dueling solos, resurrecting the feel of the famous 1952 Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa drum-battle recording, *The Drum Battle—Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich at JATP*. Ford was playing a vintage Slingerland Radio King drumkit once owned by the legendary Irving "Irv" Cottler (Frank Sinatra, Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald), and Caputo played a Slingerland kit that he said was given to him by Buddy Rich. The vintage vibe was heavy in the air—as if Ford and Caputo were channeling both Rich and Krupa—and their performance was energetic, entertaining, and well choreographed.

The Jeff Hamilton Trio, with Tamir Hendelman on piano and Jon Hamar on bass, performed next. Hamilton, who's played with Woody Herman, Oscar Peterson, and Ray Brown, among many others, displayed his technical prowess, fluid style, versatility, and dynamics throughout the set. The trio played several truly captivating tunes, including "Hammer's Tones," on which Hamilton showcased his impressive brush skills. When asked about his specific tuning approach during a Q&A, Hamilton said, "I tune a drum to where it sounds good, but not to exact pitches, because they don't sound the same in every room. I tune to the room."

After Hamilton's set, Perkins took the stage barefoot behind a sizable DW drumset. Together with bassist Blas Perez, they ripped through several tunes, including some from the Jane's Addiction and Porno for Pyros catalogs. The duo also switched it up a bit by playing creative interpretations of classics like the Beatles' "Come Together" and the Meters' "Cissy Strut."

Dave Weckl and his trio, featuring Steve

Weckl

Hamilton

Perkins

Weingart on keys and Benjamin Shepherd on bass, closed out the performances. In his clinic, Weckl dazzled the audience with his impressive skill, playing a multitude of technically challenging parts with ease and musicality. At times his sticks seemed like a blur, virtually hovering over his gorgeous Yamaha kit.

In addition to the clinics, fantastic vintage and modern drums abounded at the show, including tantalizing instruments by Acoutin Custom, A&F, Billy Blast, Canopus, Crush, Doc Sweeney, Dunnett Classic, DW, Fever, George Way, Gretsch, Jenkins-Martin, Ludwig, Mayer Bros., Noble & Cooley, Oriollo, Pork Pie, RBH, Sonor, Woods, and Yamaha. Relatively new manufacturers included Muro Drums, which was founded in 2017 and donates a portion of profits to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. Muro displayed one of its flagship snares, the Millennium, which is an eye-catching walnut drum with a real turquoise inlay. Another newcomer, the Las Vegas–based Cogs Custom Drums, featured its SuperSix six-ply maple snares with the company's Parallelogram seams and MC-63 six-ply maple/three-ply cherry hybrid snares.

Among the show-goers, interest in vintage drums and drum history remained strong. Some vintage highlights included a 1920s 5x14 engraved DeLuxe Super-Ludwig snare, a 1930s Duplex drumset with a trap table, an early 1960s Rogers kit in a Mardi Gras Pearl finish, and a massive Rogers 1970s double bass kit in a block finish. In addition, Ronn Dunnett exhibited a series of original drum-design drawings by George Way along with some photographs from Way's archives.

Many modern and vintage cymbals were on display and for sale, including products from Istanbul Mehmet, Sabian, and Zildjian. For those stocking up on accessories and looking to try out the latest gear, wares from Aquarian, Evans, Promark, Regal Tip, Remo, Vater, and Vic Firth were ripe for the picking. And the retailers Drum Flip, Guitar Center, and the Professional Drum Shop offered significant discounts on gear.

The event was a success from start to finish. "I really think that this was our best show ever," Crutchfield told *MD* after the event wrapped up. "There was something there for everyone, and we're going to have a tough time topping this one come October 2019."

Story and photos by Bob Campbell

Caputo (left) and Ford

KIT OF THE MONTH

The Transformer

This creative yet compact setup comes to us from Westminster, California's Jimmy Tran, and it marks the second time that one of the drummer's kits has appeared in *MD*'s featured spotlight.

Tran, who plays regularly at the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California, takes pride in being creative with his drum and percussion setups, and he modified this kit to fit his particular current needs. "I wanted it to be practical," Tran says. "To make set-up easier for the sound engineer and me, in each drum I had internal Shure microphones installed with DW's MAY miking system. It's also compact and easy to assemble. And it's novel to the eyes—in addition to being a unique-looking mini drumset, it can be converted into a cocktail kit."

The drums, which were made by Parish Drum Designs, comprise a 6.5x13 snare with a Remo djembe batter head and an 8x14 floor tom/bass drum outfitted with Aquarian heads. Tran's Soultone cymbals include a set of hi-hats, a splash, and a cymbal stack. And the drummer fleshed out the setup with DW and Gibraltar hardware, DW Sidekick and Tambo pedals, an LP cowbell, and a DW tambourine.

Tran tells *MD* that as he was breaking in this setup during a gig at Disneyland at the same time that the 2017 NAMM show in Anaheim was occurring, an audience member caught his eye in the middle of the performance. "It was Benny Greb, dancing to our song," Tran says. "During our break he was kind enough to say hi, and he inquired about my setup. I asked him if I could record him testing it out, and he made the kit sing without any effort."

A video of Greb playing Tran's unique kit can be found at YouTube.com; search under "MrTinyJam Benny Greb."

Photo Submission: Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to kitofthemonth@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit of the Month" in the subject line.

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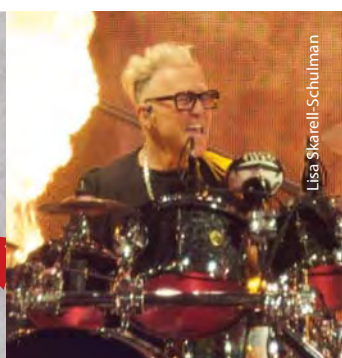
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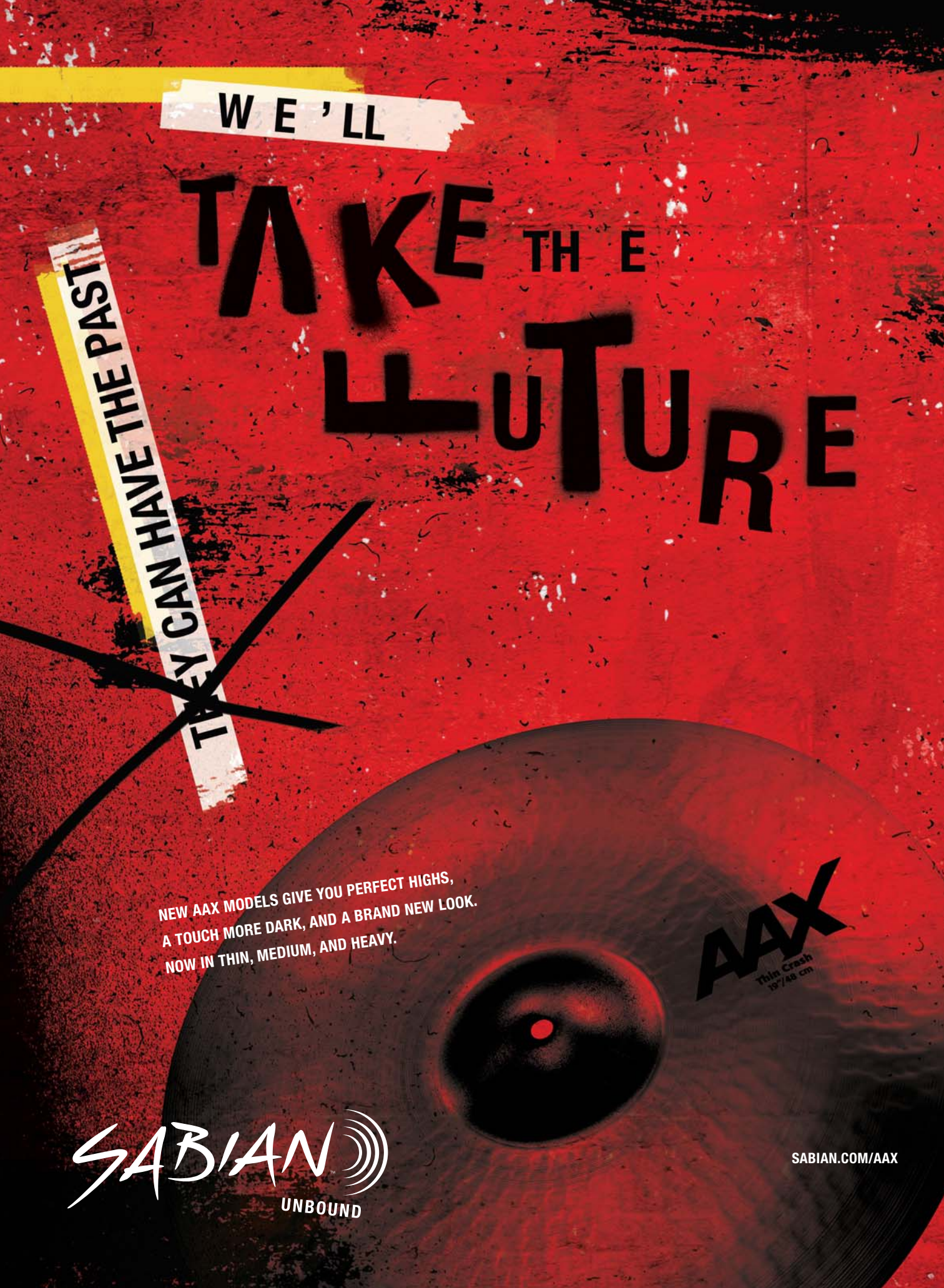
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